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DECEMBER 1988

A SOVIET WEEKLY
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NEW TIMES

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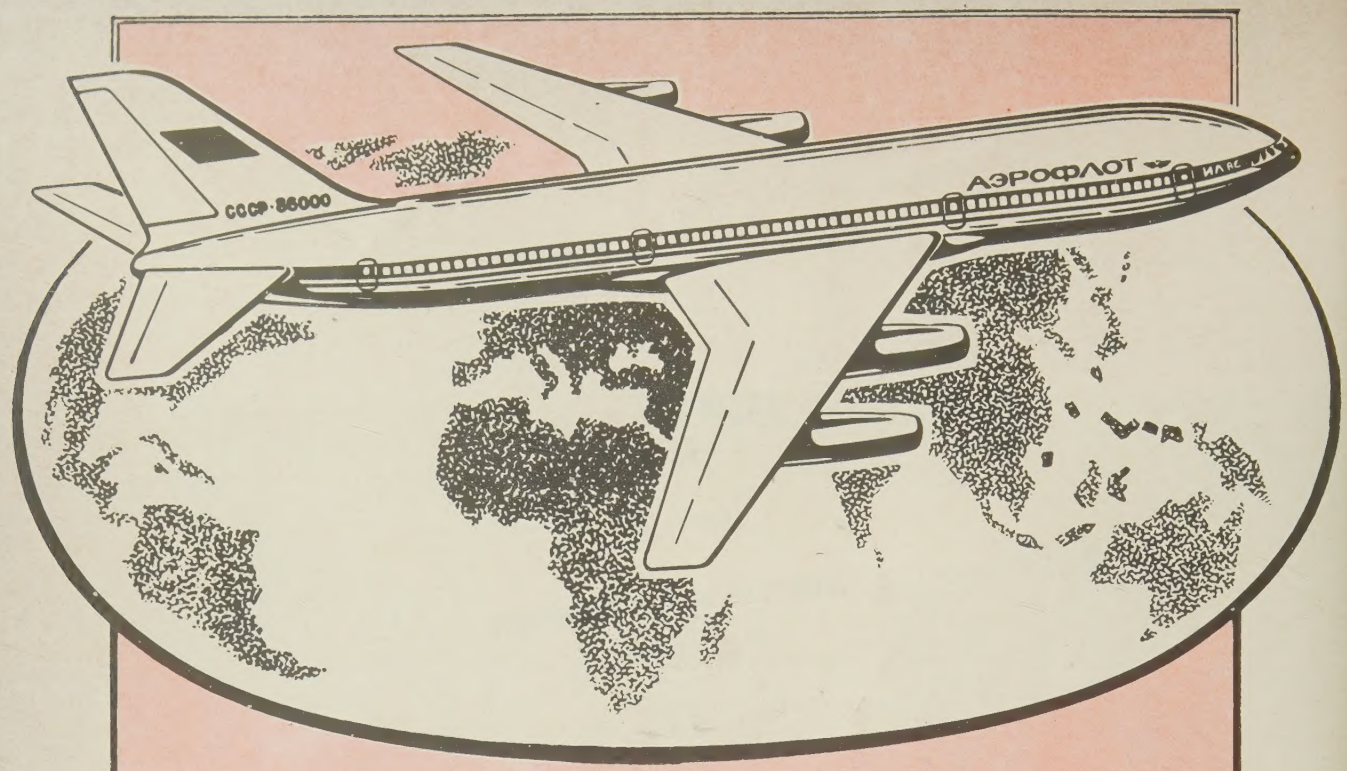

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NEW TIMES

lo. 52, December 1988

ounded 1943

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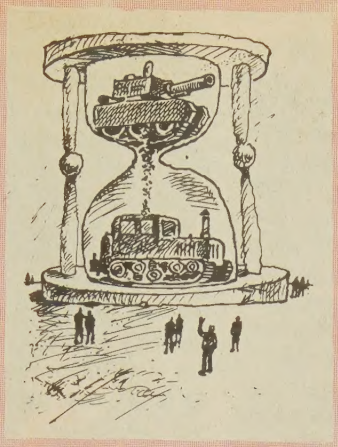

RESPONSES

The new Soviet initiatives announced by Mikhail Gorbachev in his recent U.N. address are discussed by John Mroz, President of the Institute for East-West Security Studies

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Cover by Yuri Rost

Our address: Pushkin Square, Moscow, GSP, 103782, U.S.S.R. Telephones: 229-88-72, 209-07-67
Telex: 411164a NEWT SU, 411164b NEWT SU, 411164c NEWT SU ● Telefax: 200-41-92, 200-10-38
Cables: New Times Pushkin Square Moscow
Published in Russian, English, French, German, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, Polish, Czech and Greek
Printed by the Moskovskaya Pravda press in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

material reprinted must be acknowledged

New Times is delivered to you by Aeroflot

"Tears well up in my eyes..."

"I cannot agree with Academician Andrei Sakharov"

"Hasty decisions as concerns the nationality issue are inappropriate"

"We at long last have taken a really serious approach to the nationalities problem"

GLASNOST

Lydia Pakhomova
Rostov-on-Don, U.S.S.R.

■ Tears well up in my eyes as I watch reports from Armenia on television. I shudder at the sight of these unfortunate and exhausted people. They have passed through a terrible ordeal. Heaps of ruins, concrete beams, warped floors and ceilings, broken window frames... How much time will it take to restore all this and bring life back to normal? It was officially promised that the towns and villages would be restored within two years. But I think this work will take more time. A great many people now need medical aid, many of them will remain disabled after the tragedy.

When I watched and listened to reports from Armenia, the following idea came into my mind. Being an invalid, I know from my own experience how hard life is for one who has lost his leg or arm. Neither transport nor flats or streets are adapted for those people. Is it possible to drive in a wheelchair on our pavements? Certainly not. I have a suggestion to the designers, architects and builders of a future Spitak and new residential areas of Leninakan and Kirovakan. When you start designing new blocks of flats, streets and residential districts, please don't forget **who** will live there.

Boris Lazarev, LL.D.
Moscow, U.S.S.R.

■ I have just read your Perestroika and Human Rights supplement and as a steady reader, a writer and scholar, I cannot agree with some of the points which Academician Andrei Sakharov makes in his article, in particular his views on the situation around Nagorny Karabakh and also the problem of the Soviet Union's national state structure. I think one cannot a priori analyze the knotty frame of state relations between nationalities, especially today when they are so acute. Unlike the natural sciences, this area tolerates no impeccable decisions and cannot be forecast with mathematical accuracy.

We must remember that when back in the 1920s our country acquired its present complex national state structure, Lenin did not raise the issue of arbitrarily simplifying it. After all, this complexity is of historical origin, affected by a whole range of both objective and subjective factors. So when it is said of union bodies that they supposedly were "indecisive" one cannot agree with that at all.

Fully-embracing measures were adopted from the very outset. The U.S.S.R. Supreme Soviet Presidium debated the situation in and around Nagorny Karabakh Autonomous Region and made its stand crystal clear. The resolution taken on Nagorny Karabakh provides for the solution of the numerous economic and social issues underlying the resentment and dissatisfaction of its population, especially its overwhelming Armenian contingent.

Gennady Mar,
vice-director
for scientific work,
Institute of Instrument
Making,
Moscow, U.S.S.R.

■ Armenia's suffering is suffering we also feel, as the earthquake has caused invisible cracks in every heart. The force of this pain is somewhat alleviated only when one learns of the truly universal compassion and the helping hand extended from all over and also of our leader Mikhail Gorbachev's breaking off a major visit to be with the people in this hour of need.

Professor
M. Djunusov, Ph.D.
Moscow, U.S.S.R.

■ Decisive steps are being taken in our country against the negative developments in the area of relations between nationalities. I must say I disagree with Academician Andrei Sakharov who believes that the central authorities should have been more decisive in avoiding the tragic events. It is easy enough to deliberate in a purely theoretical frame, in detachment from practice. I believe the question is far more complex. The deformative processes in national relations have long been brewing. Thus, the Karabakh problem arose yet in the 1920s and the 1950s. Democratization and glasnost have caused to surface what was latent and hidden before.

One may consider pluralism and glasnost to be a test of people's civic and social maturity. Not everyone passes this test.

Thus manifested in some of the country's regions is an ethnic egotism, attempts to extract from the new machinery of economic administration and political reform the greatest of advantages for oneself, for **one's own** region, **one's own** city, **one's own** republic. In short, manifested is individual, group, regional and ethnic egotism, whose carriers are not concerned in the least for the lawful interests and sentiments of other peoples. We may observe quite a few facts of national arrogance with respect to the language and culture of other nationalities.

It is my conviction, especially today, within the context of what is taking place in Armenia, that the immoral elements corrupted during the period of stagnation are fomenting vile nationalistic feeling.

Professor
Gamlet Tavadov, Ph.D.
Moscow, U.S.S.R.

■ When I read some of the things that are published in the press I think hasty decisions as concerns the nationality issue inappropriate. What is called for here is, in Lenin's words, "sufficient prudence and impartiality," as "haste may only... jeopardize the

ikhail Gorbachev in Leninakan

TASS photo

ause of complete and ulti-ate unity." In the framework f the socialist multinational tate, a successful solution ill be found for nationality sue only on the basis of in-rests of the parties con-rned, of the expression of ill of the peoples, and on the asis of serving the interests cementing unity and al-nce between them. In this spect any decision based on e "victor-vanquished" or ction-counteraction" princi-e is out of the question. It is tremely dangerous to be otivated by ambition and to ay on national sentiment, herever nationalities issues ise.

As a scholar who has de-oted many years to analyzing lations between nationalities am often asked whether we ill be able to overcome the roblems besetting us, hether we will be able to de-se the conflicts that erupt.

Though admittedly these oblems are far from simple, e many-sided and are hard resolve, I feel optimistic, pecially now that we have all en for ourselves the inter-tionalist spirit and human mpassion with which Soviet ople of all nationalities have responded to the tragedy of the Armenian people. The creative potential of friendship, of the internationalism of the Soviet people, is indeed mighty.

Conviction that the accumulated negative phenomena will be surmounted is bolstered likewise by the circumstance that we at long last have taken a really serious approach to the problem. Indeed, over the past two years more notice has been taken of nationalities problem than in the 50 years before.

One must particularly stress Mikhail Gorbachev's unfailing concern for the situation in and around the Nagorny Karabakh Autonomous Region. We all see that in what is printed in the newspapers about the meetings of the Politburo of the CPSU Central Committee, in what is shown on television, and in what is reported about the meetings with the working people, especially in the earthquake-battered regions of Armenia.

The CPSU Central Committee is to meet in June 1989 for a plenum that for the first time ever will deal with nationalities problems. The U.S.S.R. Supreme Soviet Presidium and the Commissions on Projected Legislation of the two chambers have been instructed to form a working group of U.S.S.R. Supreme Soviet deputies representing all the constituent republics that will be mandated to draft proposals for the solution of the matured issues of the national state structure of the U.S.S.R.

The reason for this fundamental approach arises out of the need to work out a scientifically grounded, all-inclusive concept for restructuring relations between nationalities, which as such will be an integral component of perestroika in Soviet society.

Y. Fyodorov
Samarkand, U.S.S.R.

■ I showed my children the pictures in the newspapers and said to them: "You must remember, children, that this is a great tragedy." At the blood transfusion centre I saw many people of many different nationalities. One young man, who said that ten years ago he had suffered from infectious hepatitis, implored the doctors to accept blood from him at least to make plasma out of it. My 54-year-old mother also donated her blood.

Though we do not have any relatives in Armenia and have never been there, we could not overlook its tragedy.

We were shocked that at this dire hour, when all, one would think, would pull together to fight the devastation, certain vile characters maliciously gloat that "this is punishment for your sins" or cable "congratulation," while others demand that help from Azerbaijan be spurned.

We were all deeply moved by virtually the entire world extending Armenia a helping hand. I bare my head in honour of the soldiers and pilots of the Soviet liner and of the crew of the Yugoslav plane who, rushing to help their Armenian brethren, were killed in the crashes. I take off my hat to the French, Austrian, Italian, Swiss and British rescue workers, to the specialists from Cuba, from the U.S. and many other countries who flew out at once to help. Even Israel, with whom we do not have diplomatic relations, could not but help in these tragic circumstances.

May those who at this moment may still tend to split up things between themselves pause to think as to what might happen with them should misfortune overtake them.

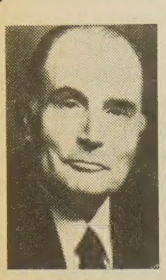
Kindness is always rewarded over and above. Though the people of Armenia have no time now to voice gratitude as they have to save the still living and take care of the survivors, I am sure that when the time comes they will erect a wonderful monument of Friendship and Solidarity to all who came to their need in their hour of trial, to all who so unselfishly anticipated pleas for help.

What has ruled the world from times immemorial is not evil malice which engenders retaliation, but common sense, kindness and mercy.

Armenia Relief Fund: U.S.S.R. Vnesheconombank Account No. 7000412

HIGHLIGHT OF THE WEEK

PRIVATE OPINION



FRANÇOIS MITTERRAND, President of France

Before my visit to Czechoslovakia, when I was leaving Paris for Prague, I expressed my opinion of Mikhail Gorbachev's speech in the United Nations, and here I can repeat only what I have already said. It is an excellent initiative. I consider this unilateral decision crucial from the psychological and political points of view. We all have been asking when really productive talks on disarmament will begin in Vienna, when the entire mechanism of talks will be set in motion. And Mr Gorbachev has anticipated this progress.

The unilateral disarmament measure announced in New York is obviously not yet a full answer to the questions which arise in connection with a reduction of conventional armaments. I do not say that to belittle the importance of this decision. It is simply necessary to move further. I am sure that the leaders who bear the main responsibility for the future of the world intend to advance along this road.

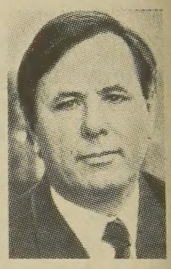
JAMES ALDRIDGE, writer, Britain

New Times is my old good friend. I came to know it during the Second World War, and we have never parted since then. I have contributed to the magazine several times. It should be said that it has always given the readers a wealth of information on a wide range of issues. For instance, in the 1950s New Times told its readers about events in Malaysia, China, India, or in other countries and regions. In short, it has always been a well-informed magazine. Today it faithfully reflects the process of perestroika taking place in the Soviet Union.

I have been a constant reader of New Times also in the outgoing year 1988 which was rich in important events linked first of all with the incipient process of disarmament. A new atmosphere has been created in the world. Much credit for this goes to the Soviet Union which has advanced a wide range of peace initiatives and proposals and has convincingly demonstrated its desire and readiness, jointly with other states, to discuss and tackle any outstanding issues. The main problems are prevention of the threat of a thermonuclear disaster and a further improvement of the international climate. The considerable successes gained on this path are an important result of the outgoing year. Perhaps for the first time in many years we can talk about these results with satisfaction and optimism.

The broad response evoked by the tragic events in Armenia also testifies to the noticeable positive shifts taking place in the world. I hope the New Times readers know well about British aid in overcoming the aftermath of the earthquake. I saw how many people wishing to donate to the Armenia relief fund queued up at the doors of the Moscow Narodny Bank in London from the early morning. This fund has been considerably supplemented by the fees from a charity concert organized by world famous musicians in London a few days ago.

I think that the outgoing year has seen a greater than ever understanding of the interdependence of all states, their responsibility for all that is taking place in the world and realization of the need to overcome difficulties and tackle various problems by joint effort.



ANDREAS von BÜLOW, member of the Bundestag from the Social Democratic Party, expert on security policy, F.R.G.

I was greatly impressed by Mikhail Gorbachev's address to the United Nations. It was an excellent speech projected far into the future and containing proposals on a wide range of issues. Gorbachev openly spoke about the ideological constraint of the oppositie worlds and showed ways of overcoming this anomalous situation.

The announced cuts in troops and armaments mean that the confrontation of military potentials in Central Europe will diminish. They also indicate a distinct turn of the Warsaw Treaty Organization towards a defensive strategy. This makes real what has long been talked about confidentially. The Soviet Union's unilateral measure is a bold step.

NATO has been drawing up a reply to the East's proposals for two and a half years now. The contours of a reply are already visible, but they do not seem very convincing to me. The aim is to preserve the maximum of armaments, with disarmament measures intended for the other side. NATO should at last come out with far-reaching proposals that could form the basis of an agreement on arms reduction stages. But it is necessary to determine first of all what kind of Europe we want to see. Gorbachev spoke about demilitarizing the East-West confrontation. This is the essence of the matter. Major arms cuts, far more substantial than NATO can imagine, are necessary for this purpose. And in any case, the North Atlantic alliance has no grounds whatever to think about a further modernization of the existing nuclear armaments and compensation for the weapons being scrapped.

ARMENIA

Grief and hope

On the third day after the quake rescue parties from Britain, France, Italy, the United States, West Germany, Austria were already working in Armenia... The flow of medicines, machines, food and clothing coming in from abroad grew with every passing day. More and more dollars, pounds, marks, lire poured into the relief fund accounts.

It was on that day that one official remarked: today they are helping us, and after the Chernobyl disaster there was only suspicion and distrust...

It's difficult to tell whether the remark was intended to reproach the West for its stance two years ago, or to express surprise over the tidal wave of sympathy with Armenia. Neither is justified, though.

Let's recall how we learned about the disaster on the Pripyat River only after the terrible news had spread world over. In those April days of 1986 the country was only starting to recover from long years of silence, and the system, perfected in decades, did not fail to work. It's probably too late now to inquire who decided to pass the tragedy over in silence and why, what departmental ambitions prevented the truth from coming to light.

This could not happen in December 1988 any more. Not only because news of a calamity of such magnitude, a quake especially, can hardly be hushed up.

Today we are just living in different country.

Today we are living in a country where openness gradually becomes a way of life, though undoubtedly things do not run smoothly. We are living in a country that no longer knows two different truths – for foreign and domestic consumption. That is why reports coming from Armenia today contain both sharp criticisms and hard questions.

Why necessary equipment was inaccessible in Armenia in the very first hours and days after the quake? Why aid, both from abroad and other parts of the country, does not reach the disaster areas in time? Why there is sluggishness where efficiency could have saved lives? Why again and again do we have to call for self-discipline and order? These unavoidable "whys" are numerous. We know answers to some of them, still some remain unanswered.

The unprecedented quake in Armenia's highland coincided with the major shake-up our society is living through.

Today the new thinking has become the only criterion of practice.

This could not but have an effect on the developments connected with the plight in Armenia. There was much that was previously unheard of. Mikhail Gorbachev's dramatic return from a foreign trip, his arrival to the quake-stricken areas. The Soviet government's assembling in Yerevan for an emergency session. Lifting of entrance restrictions for rescue parties and medical teams from all over the world. Daily TV reports from the disaster areas. Businesslike criticism of shoddiness no matter how high the person's rank.

Let us be frank. The West's suspicious attitude to this country can be vastly attributed to the secretiveness mania that has been long nurtured here. Shutting the country off the outside world we sometimes shut off ourselves, giving grounds for regarding the Soviet Union as a "closed society" defying confidence. Without confidence close cooperation, civilized relations between the two systems, breakthroughs in the disarmament process could not have been possible. Changes in our life made for achieving these breakthroughs in a shortest time possible. Would a closed society so openly report its tragedy? Would it permit transport planes of its "potential enemies" to land on its airports? Would a tragedy of the "evil empire" evoke so much heartfelt compassion and readiness to help?

The plight of one Soviet republic demonstrated the growing confidence in the entire country, the fact that the world of today regards the Soviet Union as a country whose relations with other nations can be, and are in fact, civilized and humane...

Amid debris and ruins of Leninakan, our attention was caught by a huge poster hanging from a wall of one of the few miraculously intact buildings. We have grown accustomed to such manifestations of crude propaganda and all they can evoke is an ironic grin at their banality and inappropriateness. But at that time we just looked upon it with another eye. Depicted on the poster was a crossed-out nuclear bomb. Our colleagues from other publications and we ourselves wrote that ruins of Armenian cities bring to mind images of the nuclear Armageddon. Reporters jumped at the information that destruction in Armenia was comparable to that caused by nuclear blasts, although nuclear bombs can differ in yield – a single bomb was enough to lay waste to Hiroshima... We tend to maintain often and readily that the nuclear war is our common enemy and that in order to survive nations should unite regardless of their political systems. This time not the common enemy, but the tragedy of one country brought nations together, bound them with ties of human solidarity. The world at large does not feel enmity towards the Soviet Union any more, but is attracted to it by virtue of a shared grief, wrote the French Le Monde. The quake swept off national and political frontiers.

On December 7, when Mikhail Gorbachev was speaking from the U.N. rostrum on the necessity to settle political problems by political means and humanitarian ones from humane positions, few people knew that the raging calamity was already putting

Common graves for the victims

Missionaries of

Mother Teresa, a Nobel Peace Prize laureate, founder of the Missionaries of Charity

Mother Teresa (Agnes Gonxha Bojaxhiu), a Nobel Peace Prize laureate, the founder and Mother Superior of the Missionaries of Charity, is visiting this country for the second time already. Both times tragic events brought her here. First, it was the Chernobyl disaster, now – the killer quake in Armenia.

The Missionaries of Charity are active in 87 countries today. Before long, they will arrive in one of the Moscow clinics.

We are always where human sufferings and pain abound, said Mother Teresa, and we are always prepared to share with these people our kindness and love. In our work we are never after great or outstanding exploits. We are just doing things people need every day. Our help is a drop in the ocean, but without it the ocean will be a drop smaller.

We are prepared to carry out our humble efforts wherever necessary. We don't have our own hospitals, but we do have so-called "help homes" for the aged, crippled, dying. We have set up such homes both in developed nations and poor ones. For instance there are "help homes" for people with AIDS in New York and Washington D.C.

Every one of us vowed before the Lord to devote all her life to a disin

this call to the humankind on a severe trial. The world community of nations has proved that these words were heard and perceived not just as another bit of fine rhetorics, but as a basic principle of the Soviet politics.

It is tragic, though, that there should be a catastrophe to make nations renounce political enmity and differences, free themselves from mutual prejudices and distrust. We understand, of course, that time will eventually ease pain and dry tears, that political considerations that stepped aside only yesterday will return to the foreground. We sincerely wish that the wonderful solidarity that the world displayed in these days of sorrow could last in future.

Today last obstructions are being removed in Leninakan, Spitak, Kirovakan. It started snowing. The snow is slowly covering the ruins with a clean white shroud... Foreign rescue parties are leaving Armenia. They have worked honestly and hard. We are grateful to them for their work and their sympathy.

New tunes are starting to be heard in the mournful requiem for Armenia. These are the tunes of resurrection. After burying their dead, teeth still clenched, people are starting to restore ruined homes, towns and villages. People from all over the country are with them in this uphill job.

Life is going on.
Life is beginning.

Alexei Bukalov
Dmitry Pogorzhelsky

They need the warmth of our hearts

Charity come to Moscow

terested service to the poorest – we never accept any fees, subsidies or grants... People are kind. They love to share everything they have, even when their own possessions are scarce. We never have to say: we need this or that... We take care of 158,000 lepers and we have never experienced any shortage of food or medicines.

In the past, Mother Teresa went on to say, people tended to speak of the needy, rather than do anything for them, now they are willing to help. We feel there is now much more genuine concern for the poor. And the poor respond in kind. Poor people in India make food in their own homes and then bring it for our patients. It was never like this before.

After her first visit to this country, Mother Teresa thought of setting up a mission at one of the hospitals for the gravely ill. The talks to this regard began. The tragedy in Armenia helped to facilitate them.

Thousands died, said Mother Teresa, but we should remember those who are recuperating or dying, who are crippled for life. All sufferings that the quake brought to the people will eventually serve the good, and let my words not sound blasphemous. So many people have come, still more wanted to... My sisters have been praying day in, day out, they also long to come. The tragedy united us and there is good in it as well.

The tragedy helped to bring out the best in people. Poor people, on learning that I was going to your country, asked me if they could help. They told me: "You fly, Mother Teresa, and we will pray so that you could help everybody there." We came here by a British Airline flight, and when I told air hostesses that I was going to Armenia, they gave me a large bag with food and things. Inside there was even a baby's feeding bottle...

We have been paying attention to man's physical fitness – to muscles and organs – to treatment of the body. But for long years we have thought that soul is something immaterial, abstract, nonfunctional, ethereal. Now (without going into philosophical intricacies) we start to understand that soul is not just another word, it's a principal constituent of our being, which we tend to ignore, never treat or care for.

Mother Teresa and sisters of her organization treat human souls all over the world. Now they will be doing it in this country as well. Mother Teresa decided to set up a mission with the all-union centre for spinal damage where gravely ill patients will receive help.

Armenia Relief Fund: U.S.S.R. Vnesheconombank Account No. 7000412

Our sisters have worked in different places and different countries – during famine in Ethiopia, flood in India... We are missionaries of charity, we help the needy to feel dignity. We will wash the patients, feed them, share our love and concern. Even should anyone of them die, we'll make it possible to die in peace. Once in Calcutta, says Mother Teresa, I found a man. He was lying in a cesspit covered with flies and worms. I brought him to one of our homes for the dying. It took me three hours to clean him of worms and wash him. Then he looked up and said: "All my life I lived like an animal, but I'm dying like an angel." He died with a smile on his lips...

In the near future four sisters from the Missionaries of Charity are coming from Rome to the Soviet clinic. They will not be paid for their work, will live at the clinic and eat together with the patients. Close to their room there will be a small chapel. The Mother Superior said:

Sisters of the Missionaries of Charity never have a rest, or days off, or a holiday, but as a car needs refuelling, our sisters need prayer to have strength for their service.

Vladimir Galin

Prof. Robert Gale, the well-known American doctor, has come with his colleagues to Armenia to aid the quake victims

Czechoslovakian rescue workers Lt. J. Kaspar and Cap. R. Pokorny saved a 62-year-old Leninakan woman trapped for ten days in the ruins

Fatal mission

At 8:31 p.m. on December 11, 1988, a Yugoslav AN-12 Air Force transport lifted off from the Petrovac airfield outside Skoplje with medical supplies, provisions, reinforced concrete cutting equipment for rescue work in quake-shattered buildings and detectors for spotting trapped earthquake victims, **our Belgrade correspondent Vladimir Grishni** reports.

However, some twelve kilometres from Yerevan airport the plane crashed, killing the entire crew, including their captain Lt. Col. Predrag Marinkovic, and navigator Lt. Col. Milan Micic and also Maj. Milenko Simic, Maj. Vladimir Ercic, and Ensigns Borisa Mosurovic, Jovan Zisov and Milisav Petrovic.

Maj. Gen. Budimir Dusan relates:

The crew flew their AN-12 some dozen years or so, in short, accumulated a wealth of expertise. Their life stories are very ordinary, typical of the current Yugoslav generation of flyers.

Predrag Marinkovic, a go-getting man full of grit, born 1937, enjoyed his crew's complete trust. Milan Micic, 48, started off his flying career at an air-mechanics' school, after which he took a course at the Air Force Academy. Vladimir Ercic, the darling of the entire air wing, who with much flying experience held great promise as pilot, turned 40 only a fortnight ago. Milenko Simic, 36, did not learn he had been promoted to major, as when the plane took off, he had worn a captain's insignia. The oldest and most experienced member of the crew, Borisa Mosurovic, who was born in 1933, presented a model for the wing in which he served. Air mechanic Milisav Petrovic, who turned 43 in August, was an engine fanatic. Finally, "Sparks" Jovan Zisov enjoyed the affection of all who knew him for his humour and friendliness.

Their funeral took place on December 16. All Yugoslavia mourns them.

* * *

Yugoslavs have a very good idea of what a fraternal helping hand means in an hour of trial, especially because of the tragic calamities they have themselves experienced: thus memories of the 1963 Skopljie earthquake are still fresh in their minds.

The airlift arranged between Belgrade and Yerevan funnels material aid to quake-shattered Armenia. Yugoslavia's government commission supervising aid to the disaster area is working overtime.

Dr **Janko Obocki,** member of the Federal Executive Council and the Chairman of the Federal Committee for Labour, Public Health and Social Security, who heads this body, says:

"As soon as news of Armenia's disaster came in, the Yugoslav government decided to assign five billion dinars (with 1,000 dinars the equivalent of 13 kopecks) as aid to the earthquake victims. Yugoslavs are donating money to the special accounts opened in all the country's republics, while industrial establishments offer some output for shipment to the disaster area. The government of Macedonia says it is willing to accept at least a hundred Armenian children for treatment. Some people want to adopt orphaned Armenian children. Vrsac schoolchildren have appealed to schoolchildren and teachers throughout Yugoslavia to launch a campaign to collect donations with which to build a school in a quake-hit district."

■

Armenia Relief Fund: U.S.S.R. Vnesheconombank Account No. 7000412

Anonimity preferred

On December 15, **our Tokyo correspondent Vladimir Ovsyannikov** reports, an elderly Japanese visited the Soviet Embassy to hand in as his modest contribution a well-worn blanket uttering lengthy apologies for its condition.

That same day a Japanese grandmother contributed a flask chockful of 100-yen coins, which for six long years she had been setting aside for a rainy day. Though she preferred to remain anonymous out of modesty, the 93,600 yen donated (with 1,000 yen equivalent to 4.9 rubles) will for long remain in my memory as symbolical of the magnanimity of this elderly Japanese woman's heart, which had taken the plight of faraway, unfamiliar Armenia as a personal tragedy.

Several days after the Armenian earthquake, the Japanese government assigned 1,300 million yen in gratuitous aid to the victims, incidentally one of the largest amounts of money Japan has ever sent through government channels to any country afflicted by a natural calamity. Of this sum one billion yen will be funnelled in cash via the Japanese and Soviet Red Cross societies. The remainder will be spent to buy portable power plants, water purifying equipment, tents, sleeping bags, and medical equipment and supplies.

If anyone, the Japanese are well aware of the ravages earthquakes wreak. The twelve Japanese from the Juki firm helping Armenians to build a sewing machine factory in Kirovakan luckily survived the perfidious earthquake and, returning home, counted themselves obliged to ship 10,000 blankets plus provisions to fellow survivors in Armenia.

■

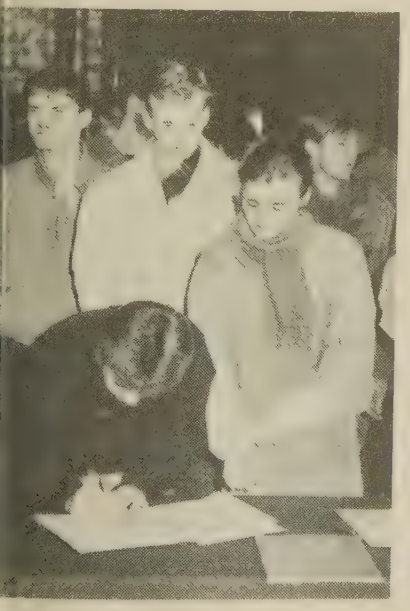
From Berlin to Spitak

Our Berlin office was already packed with heaps of blankets, warm clothing and linen when I met Bernd Bigalke, a worker at the local Messelektronik Factory, **G.D.R.and West Berlin correspondent Anatoly Kovrigin** reports. He could only just carry the enormous sacks of children's clothes donated by a team of workers from the plant. They simply couldn't remain indifferent to the tragedy in Armenia.

People in the G.D.R. want to go to Armenia and help save the sick and wounded, and to rebuild what was ruined. 16 doctors and nurses of the Christoph Wilhelm Hufeland polyclinic said they had been prepared to go to Yerevan the moment they heard about the tragedy. A number of students – training to be architects offered their help in rebuilding ruined houses and factories.

"I'm too old to go to Armenia and help on the spot," wrote Werner Müller from Dresden, "but I'm sending 200 marks from my pension. Please buy food or warm clothing and send it to Spitak." Such letters keep coming...

The airline Interflug has already arranged two special flights to the Soviet Union bringing in medical equipment, tents, and medicine. There is no doubt that both material aid and moral support will continue coming from the G.D.R. People all over the country are sending money to emergency bank account No. 644. ■



Thousands of G.D.R. citizens are calling nowadays on the U.S.S.R. Embassy in Berlin to sign the condolences book

Fidel Castro: it's Cuba's moral duty

Fidel Castro donated blood at a donor clinic in Havana's Marianao district, thus contributing to the 14.5 tons of blood plasma that will be sent by Cuba to the quake victims of Armenia. The Cuban leader stressed in his talk with journalists: "Emergency aid to the Soviet people, who have been struck by this devastating tragedy is Cuba's moral and human duty." Thousands of Cubans have voiced their desire to donate blood for Armenia.

Seeing the IL-76TD plane off at the Havana airport, Fidel Castro said:

"This could become a new form of cooperation for the whole world, cooperation open to big and small nations alike. Our aid is of course modest, but it is a token of our heartfelt desire to help the Soviet people..."

Over 100 medical workers from Cuba, have been sent to Armenia.

Several aircraft carrying relief supplies have already left for the stricken area. ■

Italy

Over the past days there has been a continual airlifting of supplies from Italy to Armenia. 50 Italian fire-fighters, a team of doctors and a rescue party are working in Spitak. Italian C-130 cargo planes have made several special flights bringing in medical supplies and warm clothing. A round-the-clock communication link with the specialists in the field is being maintained by the centre. Various relief supplies, paid for by a range of Italian organizations and social bodies are already leaving Florence for the victims of the disaster. Over 20 tons of food is being sent from Rome by private companies.

Fiat decided to airlift three advanced bulldozers and four lorries, the Province of Emilia-Romagna has offered to assemble a hospital in Spitak, and the Banco di Roma has opened a special account No 43051 to which Italians are donating money.

According to preliminary and incomplete information there is over 30 billion lire on the account (this is excluding material aid). The Sicilian government alone has allocated 15 billion lire (10,000 lire = 4.68 rubles).

The main task at present is to airlift goods from Italy to the areas of greatest need. Other means of transportation, including motor transport are also being used. The fact that flights to Armenia are made by NATO C-130 cargo planes and the entire operation is supervised by a western general is positive sign in itself. Such a situation could hardly have been possible in Italy before. What is happening today is being seen here as a positive aspect of the new political thinking, **Pavel Negoitsa, New Times and Trud correspondent to Italy,** reports. ■

Professional help from Algeria

On the 11th of December 15 tons of medicine, 400 tents, 3,000 warm blankets and other necessary supplies were airlifted to Armenia by Algerian Air Force cargo planes under a special government decision, **our Algeria correspondent Evgeny Bobrov** reports. A team of Algerian doctors, a rescue party, and seismologists have also arrived to Armenia. Many of them participated in the rescue work after the ElAsnam earthquake in Algeria.

Mohammed Belkheir and Dalila Abouidi have contacted the New Times office and expressed sympathy on behalf of their colleagues working in the Algerian ministry of information and culture. Prime Minister Kasdi Merbah has also visited the Soviet Embassy offering condolences to families of the victims, and the Soviet people and leadership. ■

Million-mark cheque

Rudolf Augstein, publisher of Der Spiegel, one of West Germany's biggest weeklies, has presented a one-million-mark cheque in aid to Armenia's people. We asked the Hamburg publisher what had motivated him to do so.

"The awareness that we are all living in one world and that the misfortune of one is the misfortune of all," he said. "I also wanted to show the way and get others to follow suit in helping the ancient people of Armenia, who have suffered so much throughout their history, especially in this twentieth century." ■

Burda family gift

The West German Burda family of Aenne and her sons, Franz, Frieder and Hubert, have donated one million marks (with 100 West German marks equivalent to 34.59 rubles).

In a New Times interview Aenne Burda said:

"We have been doing business with your country for more than a quarter of a century now. The editions we publish for the U.S.S.R. are mounting with every year to currently total millions of copies. We have evolved absolutely novel forms of cooperation. We also visit the U.S.S.R. and host Soviet specialists. The Armenian earthquake came as a great shock. I with my boys, relations, colleagues, staff and all West Germans, were deeply moved by Soviet Armenia's tragedy. One must definitely note that Mikhail Gorbachev's new policy is largely responsible for the solidarity shown for your people." ■

Firemen, rescue parties, building workers and doctors from all over Poland came to Armenia

Compassion

Though Poland is, so to say, seismic-resistant, its people have suffered in this present century the misery of two world wars,and the apocalyptic vision of ruined towns and villages, thousands of casualties, and hundreds of thousands of homeless evoked what were already forgotten dark memories in every Polish mind. As soon as news of the appalling tragedy came in, millions of compatriots volunteered assistance. **Jan Lysek, executive editor of the Polish edition of our magazine,** dispatched to Moscow.

He said he thinks Poland has never had such a widespread movement of aid. Telephones keep buzzing at Party committees, enterprises and newspaper offices, with people asking where they should donate money and bring various things. Prime Minister Mieczyslaw Rakowski instituted an aid coordinating committee, with Minister Michal Janiszewski at its head. Meanwhile doctors, rescue workers, mountaineers and building workers demanded they be allowed to go to Armenia at once. The Polish government immediately shipped tents, blankets and medical supplies to Yerevan. One of the first aircraft going out conveyed a field hospital. Subsequently, a hundred-odd experienced building workers, firemen, and rescue workers, with dogs specially trained to detect survivors under rubble, flew out to Armenia. ■

Money pours in from Sweden

It was not only applause that came from delighted spectators after a performance of Moscow's Taganka Theatre at present on tour in Stockholm; money was literally pouring into plain metal buckets. The fund-raising was not intended to boost the company's budget, but rather to help the victims of the dreadful Armenian earthquake.

Five Swedish Air Force cargo planes have already delivered goods to Armenia. The government has allocated 13 million crowns (100 crowns = 9.95 rubles), dispatched a team of experts, sent 12 tons of blood, 100,000 disposable syringes, and large quantities of antibiotics and other medicines. Special medical equipment has been deployed in the exposed areas, including four advanced artificial kidney devices.

Later the Swedish government will discuss a longer-term relief programme for Armenia, Assistant Prime Minister Kurt Malmborg, told **our Stockholm correspondent Alexander Polyukhov.**

All in all there are 50 Swedes participating in the disaster relief mission; rescuers with specially trained "sniffer" dogs have won much praise. They found some 70 places where people probably lie buried. It's hard to tell how many lives they saved, but it is known that the 11 construction workers rescued from the ruins of Leninakan owe their lives to the work of the Swedes. Dogs occasionally break ranks shocked by the new smells and the tension of the situation, which is often difficult for people to cope with. In Sweden they will all go into quarantine.

The American rescue worker Caroline Habbard with her dog

Most Swedes cannot participate in developments in Armenia directly, but they keep sending their sympathy, money and material aid in tens of millions. The Tetra Pak Firm, which is building packaging factories in the Soviet Union, has sent a million crowns worth of tinned milk to Armenian children. Emmerich Filip, a former hotel receptionist, now a pensioner, has donated 100,000 crowns – all his life's savings. ■

"Aznavour for Armenia"

Last Sunday, men and women of different ages, origins and living standards queued up from early morning at the doors of the councils of Paris's arrondissements to hand in warm clothing, blankets, and toys for children, victimized by Armenia's devastating earthquake. This was so successful, that the city fathers decided to extend the collection for a whole week. That same night French Premier Michel Rocard announced on television that the government had leased five aircraft, a ship and a train to dispatch clothing, medical supplies and equipment to Armenia. This incidentally coincided with an Olympia concert recital, mounted by the France-U.S.S.R. Association, the receipts for which are to be donated to the Soviet Armenia Relief Fund.

For New Times **Nikita Yermakov, TASS correspondent in Paris,** called on one of the associations organized to collect donations for the earthquake victims in Armenia known as "Aznavour for Armenia." It was set up by the celebrated chansonier. Its chief Régis Bakian answered the following questions in place of Aznavour who was absent.

"Is your association dealing with any one specific aspect of assistance?"

"Yes, we intend in the main to help rebuild ravaged cities."

"Is Charles Aznavour planning to visit the disaster area, as was reported recently?"

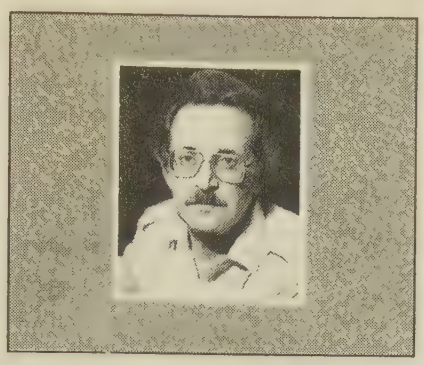
"Yes."

"Have you been getting any surprise donations?

"Yes. Thus, recently we received a money order from a jobless Turkish immigrant living here in France. Certainly a symbolical gesture." ■

Photos by Yuri Inyakin, Yuri Rost, Vladimir Svartsevich and TASS

JUNIOR WORLD



Children of Armenia

By the time our readers receive this issue of New Times the All-Union Congress of Educationalists will be over. I should be reporting its results, but I wait. Results of events of such magnitude are better understood after a period of time, and now that the congress has just ended the familiar temptation to declare its significance "historic" is too strong.

Today another thought dominates the mind... I wouldn't like to reopen the wounds, but it's impossible to keep silent...

A gruesome detail was mentioned in one of the reports of the killer quake in Armenia: bodies of dead children are lying by the ruins of a school. They say that the children could have survived had the quake hit fifteen minutes later, during a break, when children are usually playing in the yard. Another report: "A kindergarten was destroyed. Several kids were rescued from the debris alive."

A horrible thought crosses my mind: I started writing this article at a time when in Armenia there were still children buried alive under collapsed slabs. How they must have suffered! Those who mercifully lost consciousness were luckier... The thought is terrifying, but we can't afford to plunge into sweet oblivion. Perhaps, we should have appealed to people with ESP from all over the world – come on, show what you can do! You say you can transmit thoughts and inspire people at a distance? Pluck up your spirit and send across thousands of miles waves of comfort and reassurance to children who are suffering under the ruins, in hospitals, in the streets of the devastated cities... You can't raise a child from the dead, but perhaps you can bless him with at least a tiny moment of relief?

There was a time when I worked for builders' local newspapers. I saw a number of construction projects, wrote about them, but these heavy drab concrete blocks that started to appear in our cities in the late 1950s never failed to repel me. Human life seems incompatible with their unyielding rigidness, implacable dominance – they just exist by themselves. Overbearing and menacing, seemingly invincible, they collapsed wretchedly, I would say cowardly, after the first tremors came, killing everybody inside. I have a habit of asking anyone from a foreign land "Do you build houses of pre-fabricated units?" The answer is inevitably "No."

However, what's the use of talking? A fragile human life can be cut short by a brick or a tiny fragment of one. My thoughts are now with a small boy buried under a three-ton slab, and there is no more hateful enemy than its cold sinister heavyness that strangles life and blots out the sky. "High above them there looms the dark-blue plague of the sky..." wrote Osip Mandelstam inspired by another tragedy in this vale of sorrow called Armenia.

When a woman is told about the death of a child, her first reaction is to hug her own baby. She clutches the baby closer, imploring the fates: "Keep off! Mine is not for you!"

But thousands of happy Armenian kids, who just yesterday were playing in their homes, naughtily arguing with their mothers, have lost their parents, become orphaned as if everybody had forsaken them. As if everybody had fled, leaving them all alone. What could be worse than suddenly being left alone? All over the country people are willing to take them into their homes – we have not yet experienced such a powerful impulse of charity and kindness – the tragedy dominates every conversation and people are surprised by their own compassion. Every child will be cared for, but let's be cautious, three times as cautious! While rushing to the rescue, we must be careful when dealing with human lives. The main thing is – even with the best intentions – not to separate those who want to be together in times of grief, who are grasping eagerly at the remains of a once happy world.

We are not miracle-workers. Neither are we endowed with ESP, we are just people – people with children. When we speak of a human life, especially the life of a child, figures lose their inherent sense and we mourn one death as much as we would five thousand. The very word "thousand" is not applicable to life, for life is unique. Another tragedy comes back to me. Many years ago Misha Grinin, a youth from the city of Volgograd was returning home with friends from his high school graduation when a drunken truck driver lost control of the vehicle, killing them all. Later a novella entitled "A Rostov-bound steamer" (subsequently published in several editions) was found among his papers together with a poem that read:

> I don't know what the future has in store for me,
> Nobody can know that,
> And nobody can see through this curtain.
> On our deathbed alone shall we know our fate...

None of us knows our lot, or that of our children. Rousseau once wrote awe-inspiring words: do not torment your children too much preparing them for the future – they might not live to be eighteen.

Let us all hug our children closer, and together with them remember the little ones buried under huge concrete slabs. They have found eternal peace.

People who read this magazine in different languages, speak to your children and relatives in the universal language of compassion and help the orphaned children of Armenia!

Simon Soloveichik

It's now easier to move forward

Let us assume that NATO and the Warsaw Treaty Organization tell each other the truth, and move further...

JOHN EDWIN MROZ, President of the U.S. Institute for East-West Security Studies, said in a talk with our correspondent.

What do American political scientists think about Mikhail Gorbachev's speech in New York?

The speech is mainly valuable in that President Gorbachev did not confine himself to proposals and appeals to the world community, but informed it of a concrete major decision of the Soviet government, namely, the unilateral reduction of troops and conventional armaments in Europe. I think this was done to demonstrate that new political thinking means not simply words but the principle of action of your leadership. For this reason no one, even your most consistent enemies, will dare challenge the importance of this decision for the destinies of peace.

I regard the Soviet Union's latest step as continuation of your government's policy which began with the unilateral moratorium on nuclear testing. The West was then rather sceptical about the Soviet initiative, not knowing, in fact, how to respond to it. But then you extended the moratorium several times, and the number of sceptics reduced considerably.

Nevertheless, you did not join the moratorium.

That's right. But the West understood then it was an entirely new, non-traditional approach of your country and its leadership to the tackling of complicated international problems. When the Soviet Union resumed nuclear testing, no one in the West accused it of that. They understood there was no other way out. The repeated extension of the moratorium showed, however, that you were very serious about it.

Perhaps I am reasoning in a purely American way, but for me the decision announced in New York indicates, apart from everything else, that the political forces prevail over the military. It is not a simple matter, at least in our country, to talk the military into reducing the army by half a million.

Besides, in the eyes of the American public and politicians, the decision of the Soviet leadership demonstrates a change of priorities in Soviet foreign policy. You can trace this thought in the speeches of Ronald Reagan and George Bush and in newspaper comments. We political scientists also drew our attention to this fact.

We in the West often talk about the Gorbachev phenomenon. The point is that he is the first Soviet leader in contemporary history who was able to persuade world public opinion that the Soviet Union does not seek world domination but, on the contrary, has taken a very serious attitude to disarmament issues.

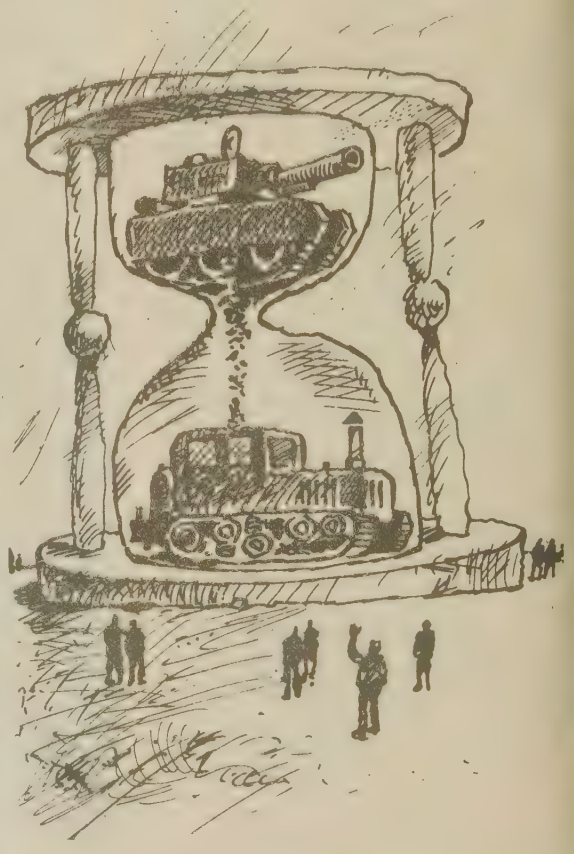
At the same time, we do not yet know all the details of your plan for a reduction of troops and conventional armaments, tanks in the first place. It is not yet clear what types of tanks and units will be pulled out. It is not a secret for any one that, along with modern weapons, the Soviet Union also has obsolete ones. Some of its units do not measure up to the present-day requirements of warfare. If only these types of armaments and units are reduced, the West will react in one way. And it will be quite another thing if a reasonable combination of obsolete and modern weapons is involved.

In his speech Gorbachev mentioned assault units, landing and other troops intended for offensive operations. In all armies of the world similar units are equipped with most up-to-date weapons, and special attention is given to their training.

If this really happens, corresponding political repercussions will follow. But, I repeat, the United States and its NATO allies will closely watch what units and armaments will be withdrawn from Eastern Europe.

You spoke about political repercussions. What kind of reaction can be expected?

I shall say right away that it would be a mistake to expect reciprocal measures from the West at present. It is not only a matter of your military superiority in the European theatre of operations, which will remain even after the cuts have been made. The rub lies in ourselves or, more



Drawing by Igor Smirnov

exactly, in the different approaches of the United States, France, Britain, the F.R.G. and other NATO countries to the question of conventional arms cuts.

Today we can talk about the opinions of different Western governments, not the reaction of NATO as a whole. The North Atlantic bloc does not simply know at present how to respond to the Soviet initiative in practical terms, that is, by the same concrete actions.

As regards the United States, at least several months should pass before the Bush administration can take any political steps as reciprocal measures.

The Soviet leader's address in the United Nations has definitely strengthened the tendency towards trust in the world. In other words, distrust and suspicion in the United States with regard to your country and, no doubt, in your country with regard to NATO are disappearing.

The West is used to treating your state as a system oriented on the expansion of its military sphere. Talking about reasonable sufficiency in the defence of its borders and those of its allies, the Soviet Union is now raising such global problems as economic and ecological security and the search of ways for the advancement of backward countries. For that reason, I think, we can talk now about the West's positive response to the latest Soviet initiative, in the sense that the West has changed its opinion about the possibility of doing business with the Soviet Union. In this context, I think, the speech will exert a very serious influence.

Besides creating a favourable general political situation, the new Soviet initiative could apparently exert a positive influence on the course of concrete talks, for instance, in Vienna.

No doubt. In this connection I would stress the timeliness of President Gorbachev's statement in which he showed the West how seriously the Soviet Union considers a reduction of conventional armaments in Europe. Many politicians and experts in all European capitals saw Moscow's genuine concern and understood that it is really prepared for a serious dialogue.

Nothing is more convincing and impressive for the establishment of confidence-building relations than unilateral action. I am sure that, when the Vienna talks resume, we shall have at them an atmosphere of greater trust than before, and this will have an immediate effect on the progress of the talks.

You stressed the timeliness of the latest Soviet initiative. But I have already heard a different opinion. The Reagan administration, they say, is no longer able to reciprocate, and the Bush administration does not yet have the possibility to do that, because it will assume office only after January 20. In the meantime, the conservatives and other opponents of a constructive dialogue between our countries will be able to define their position and exert pressure on the administration. It would therefore be better, some point out, if at his recent meeting with Reagan and Bush, Mikhail Gorbachev merely informed them of the Soviet government's decision in a private manner, postponing the official announcement till February or March of next year.

I entirely disagree with such an idea. It could make sense if only bilateral relations were involved and the Soviet leader called for similar reciprocal measures. But we have heard about the unilateral decision already taken by Moscow, a decision of great significance both for the United States and its allies.

Moreover, I would say that by his gesture Gorbachev helped the West. We haven't a common view on the issue of conventional arms cuts in Europe. More exactly, all declare for a reduction of armaments, but no one knows how to do that better. The question is now being discussed in NATO at various levels. I think the Soviet Union can help us once more by agreeing to adjourn the next round of the Vienna talks for some time, if such a proposal comes from NATO.

It is, however, clear even without that – it was much more important for the West to hear about the Soviet decision now than in February and, the more so, in March when the NATO countries work out their position on conventional armaments. If the West learned about the Soviet decision in February or March, it would be in a complicated situation, for it would have to make changes on the run, and this would lead to more delays at the talks, irritate the diplomats who would find themselves in an awkward situation, and cause other inconveniences.

Note that a number of figures are given even in President Gorbachev's speech in the United Nations, in which only several paragraphs are devoted to the Soviet government's decision. Thus, when our diplomats meet in Vienna again, they will have new figures and consequently new points of departure from which it will be easier to start for achieving mutual agreements.

That is why I can safely say that thanks to Gorbachev's address in the United Nations the West's stand will be more constructive than before. If this does not happen you will have good reason to accuse us of incapacity and the lack of seriousness: one side makes a big cut for achieving agreements, and the other is unable to work out its own point of view on this question. This is simply impossible, and I am expecting a drastic change for the better at the Vienna talks.

We in NATO have claimed for decades that we are a defensive alliance. You have said the same about the Warsaw Treaty Organization. The East and the West have now come to a point where they can tell each other: "Well, let us assume that NATO and the Warsaw Treaty countries tell each other the truth. We are defensive alliances. Let us then move further and prove by deeds that our military blocs threaten no one, but merely ensure our own security." This is what President Gorbachev did by announcing the decision of your leadership. In point of fact, a new stage in the East-West relations has been started. I would call this dialogue not détente but normalization, because we are indeed moving towards a relationship which must become a standard for all of us.

Interviewer:

EVGENY ANDRIANOV

NEW YORK

> We are witnessing initial steps
> towards a new concept
> of guaranteeing security – not by
> arms buildup,
> as it has often been in the past,
> but by arms cuts on
> a compromise basis.
>
> From Mikhail Gorbachev's address
> to the United Nations in New York
> on December 7

The business centre of Caracas, the capital of Venezuela

Wild boar beats tiger

A general election has been held in Venezuela, a Latin American country with a population of almost 18 million. As a result, Carlos Andres Perez, the ruling Party of Democratic Action candidate, has been named as President for the next five years

Twenty-three presidential candidates from dozens of political parties and factions contested the election, which started in May and embraced the whole political spectrum in the country from the ultra-left organizations to the neofascist parties.

There was no doubt, however, that only the country's two major parties that had previously held office – the Party of Democratic Action (AD) and the Social Christian Party (COPEI) – had a real chance of a installing their man in the presidential palace. In the six election campaigns held in Venezuela since the overthrow of the Perez Jimenez dictatorship in 1958, the AD won four times and the COPEI twice. In previous elections these two parties left the others a mere 8.5 per cent of the votes. This time public opinion polls predicted that they would win 80-90 per cent of the electorate.

Democratic Action's candidate was its leader, Carlos Andres Perez, or CAP, as he is called. Now 66, he was a young man when he joined the party in which he traversed the path from underground activist to leader. Under the dictatorship he was more than once arrested and jailed, emigrated and returned, again to be imprisoned. Several times he was elected deputy to the National Congress, and in 1974-79 he held the post of President of the republic. A prominent political figure not only nationwide but also on a Latin American scale, he is Vice-President of the Socialist International, sits on the Committee of the Socialist International for Latin America and the Caribbean and is known as an experienced, persevering and audacious politician who does not flinch from challenging problems.

His principal rival was the former General Secretary of the Social Christian Party, Eduardo Fernandez, a right-wing conservative figure. He is under fifty, and the Social Christians pinned their hopes on the votes of electors who are not yet thirty, whose number stands at around 40 per cent of all voters. Their hopes failed, however, since victory has gone to Perez, who polled more than 54 per cent of the votes, with Fernandez obtaining about 42 per cent.

The pledges

On the face of it, the election programmes and statements of the two major contenders looked fairly similar in their interpretation of their pledges to the electorate. Both outlined in almost identical terms the difficulties and problems the country was facing. Differences did exist, and at times quite substantial.

Both, for instance, speak in favour of Latin American integration. While the COPEI candidate makes casual mention of it, as he does lest he offend people's feelings (it is common knowledge that the U.S. frowns on Latin American economic integration, let alone any political moves in this direction), the statements made by Perez on this account are, however, more definite. He maintains that the interests of Latin America and the United States differ in many respects and that the growth of self-awareness on the part of Latin Americans is at odds with the geopolitical concepts of Washington. CAP describes the inter-American security system built around the idea of "communist threat" as outdated.

Both candidates spoke of the need to diversify the Venezuelan economy (we shall dwell on this further) and foreign trade. Venezuela possesses large deposits of oil, but it is oil that has made the country dependent on the U.S. It exports half its oil production there, being the second biggest exporter of oil to the United States. The Americans are not going to forgo Venezuelan oil. At the same time, there is always the danger that with a view to regulating the size of its import the U.S. could introduce extra duties on it, as was done last year, leading to a cut in the earnings of the seller. (It would be opportune to recall here that in the period between 1982 and 1986 alone the United States introduced the so-called "compensation tax" on Latin American imports 348 times.) Venezuelan oil exports to the United States account for 90 per cent of the country's currency earnings. So it is vitally important for Venezuela to diversify its exports geographically. Democratic Action's stand on this point is firmer than that of the Social Christians.

This has nothing to do with the modesty of the COPEI candidate. On a visit to Washington last summer, Fernandez emphasized that if elected he would be working for further cooperation with the U.S. in political, trade, economic and fi-

nancial areas. At the same time, he made no mention whatever of such important issues as Latin American unity and the striving of the countries of the continent to assert their independence in international affairs, though he did sometimes mention differences in trade, economy and finance between the Latin Americans and Washington.

Or take another example. Fernandez spoke in favour of a political settlement of the Central American crisis, the honouring of the Guatemala accords and a more substantial contribution by the Contadora group of countries (of which Venezuela is a member) to the cause of establishing peace in Central America, yet each of his statements on these questions ended in a philippic targeted on Cuba. He would seem at once to favour the implementation of the 1977 Panama-U.S. treaties on the Panama Canal, and at the same time to believe that the United States has absolutely nothing to do with the acute socio-economic crisis Panama is experiencing today. It is a fact, however, that the American sanctions have done considerable damage to the performance of the Panamanian economy. It is especially incumbent on the U.S., Fernandez feels, to take care of Latin America's destiny. Who made it so incumbent?

here are 1.8 million unemployed in Venzuela. This man eakes out a living by colcting mackle

It is no wonder, therefore, that the founder and leader of the Social Christian Party, former President Rafael Caldera, was not enthusiastic about his party candidate and, in fact, did not give him any active support during the election campaign.

Accursed economic problems

Recently, during the excavations carried out along the Orinoco River in the state of Bolivar, archeologists discovered ceramic vessels shaped like human figures. Specialists established that the finds are over two thousand years old and were used as lamps, with the inner cavities filled with oil and a protruding fibrous wick.

That is how long ago the inhabitants of today's Venezuela knew how to use oil!

But Venezuela's wealth is not confined to oil. It has, for instance, the world's tenth richest known gold reserves. Now it is in fact being plundered by gold diggers and private companies. Should the state, however, take over gold extraction, its reserves could grow substantially. Propositions are being put forward to grow redwood plantations and develop other industries. Noted Venezuelan economists hold that the country will not be able to cope with the acute problems it is now facing unless it starts to diversify its economy.

These problems are acute indeed. The national budget deficit is approaching $5 billion. According to the newspaper El Nacional, inflation reached 40 per cent in 1987, the country's all-time high.

The foreign debt is a matter of special concern for Venezuelans. How is it to be paid off? Is it possible to repay it at all? These questions arise when one stops to think of the following arithmetic: early in 1983 the Venezuelan foreign debt stood at $35 billion. Having paid off $30 billion, it simultaneously borrowed 13 billion dollars more. So, taking into account interest on extra loans, the republic's foreign debt had almost returned to $35 billion by 1988. A vicious circle!

What is to be done? Cut social programmes, freeze wages, hike prices for foodstuffs and communal services? But these measures will aggravate the political and social situation inside the country. The view is asserting itself in Venezuela that the new government must call a moratorium for a while at least on foreign debt payments.

Here Venezuelans recall that this was precisely how CAP acted, promptly and firmly when, as president, he nationalized the oil and the iron extraction industries in 1975. Then Venezuela was wallowing in flowing petrodollars and standards of living had greatly improved. The Caracas newspaper El Universal wrote as follows on the mesure taken by Perez: "Venezuela has started the process of finally liberating itself and attaining economic independence." Today the view that Perez should continue the cause he himself initiated is gaining ground.

As for CAP himself, he stated during the election campaign that the task of the future government will be to raise wages, halt inflation, improve the health care system, build cheap housing and develop public transport and social insurance.

Fernandez has frequently hinted at the possibility of privatizing nationalized factories, and eliminating superfluous control on the part of the state over the activities of Venezuelan businessmen. Plainly, this position failed to win favour with the electorate.

Youth versus experience

Electoral turnout was not the contenders' concern. In accordance with the Venezuelan Constitution, voting, besides being direct and universal by secret ballot, is also mandatory. Staying away from the polls entails fairly grave consequences: a ban on leaving the country or even on travelling within its frontiers, entering university or any other higher educational establishement, holding administrative posts in the civil service and so on.

The teams of both contenders were active and unrestrained in their election campaigns in the sense that they did not stop short of mudslinging. Fernandez had recourse to a "secret weapon" after bringing along two renowned election campaign "specialists" from the U.S. As a result, Venezuela discovered that the Democratic Action candidate turned out to be none other than "the father of corruption."

The emblem symbolizing the Social Christian Party is a tiger, while that of Party of Democratic Action is a boar. For months Venezuelans had been asking themselves which would come out on top in the struggle for the Miraflores Palace? The "tiger" of Eduardo Fernandez or the "boar" of Carlos Andres Perez? The Venezuelan press expressed the view that the "tiger" with his strength and youth was not yet a match for the experience and wisdom of the "boar." In the event this proved correct.

At the polls voters also electerd 42 senators, 182 congressmen and 326 members of state legislatures. Here too the Party of Democratic Action emerged victorious.

Rudolf Sanin

TASS photos

For several months stormy demonstrations for greater democracy have been held in Rangoon

With open eyes

Let us discard all dogmas and stereotypes about the Third World

IRINA ZORINA, Cand. Sc. (Hist.), **NIKOLAI KARAGODIN,** Cand. Sc. (Econ.), **VLADIMIR KHOROS,** D. Sc. (Hist.) and **VICTOR SHEINIS,** D. Sc. (Econ.) – all from the Academy of Sciences' Institute of World Economics and International Relations – continue the discussion on this subject.

New Times. During the previous round table on the Third World without dogmas and stereotypes we came close to the subject of socialist orientation. It seems that here, too, we have to revise our old concepts with regard to developing states.

Vladimir Khoros. The biassed character of our former theoretical notions and concrete evaluations perhaps had a particularly adverse effect on the way we treated this subject. As a result, we raised groundless expectations in the Third World and, voluntarily or not, misinformed our readers of the situation in the relevant states. Socialist orientation appeared more than 25 years ago – a period quite sufficient to draw some conclusions.

In Algeria, Tanzania, the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, Angola and Mozambique socialist orientation, the aim of building a socialist society, was proclaimed immediately or soon after the winning of independence. In Burma, Syria, Congo, Madagascar, Benin and Ethiopia this aim was proclaimed after internal struggles and the overthrowing of pro-Western governments. In Angola, Ethiopia and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen the programmes of the ruling parties rest on the principles of Marxism-Leninism. Today all these countries face various problems. Some countries (Ghana, Egypt, Guinea, Somalia and Iraq) in various periods of their development gave up socialist orientation. It seems that Burma, too, is deviating, or has already deviated, from this path.

Victor Sheinis. Let us make some points clear. First of all, we should not erect a Chinese wall between developing socialist countries (China, Vietnam, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Cuba) and socialist-oriented countries. Distinctions between them certainly exist, though they are not substantial in a number of cases (take Laos, for instance). The countries of both types are seeking to overcome their backwardness on the road alternative to capitalism, and are encountering problems that are similar in many respects. Taking the Third World as a whole, it can be stated that, contrary to earlier expectations, socialist orientation has not become a wide-scale alternative. Most of the newly free countries have adopted the path of capitalist evolution.

See the beginning in issue 44/88.

and other Burmese cities.
Photo from Time magazine (U.S.A.)

N.T. There are evidently both objective and subjective reasons for such a choice.

Vladimir Khoros. No doubt. Socialist orientation arose in the course of the national liberation movement, when in a number of countries anti-colonialism and anti-imperialism had naturally developed into a rejection of capitalism. A considerable impulse was also given by the world socialist system, the example of industrialization in the Soviet Union, though, as it has become clear recently, many national leaders, and we ourselves for that matter, greatly idealized this model of development.

Lastly, socialist orientation arose mainly in the former colonies least developed socially and economically. This was only natural, because it was regarded not only as a way of rapid social progress, but also as the most effective way of overcoming economic backwardness.

Economic failures

Nikolai Karagodin. The leaders of socialist-oriented countries, and we too, were quite successful in making the need a virtue. Backwardness, the predominance of traditional (communal) social patterns, and lack of mature national bourgeoisie were often regarded as factors conducive to non-capitalist development.

Irina Zorina. The leader of one of such countries alleged that, according to Marxism-Leninism, the transition to socialism can be started from any stage of social development. Needless to say that Marxism-Leninism teaches nothing of the kind.

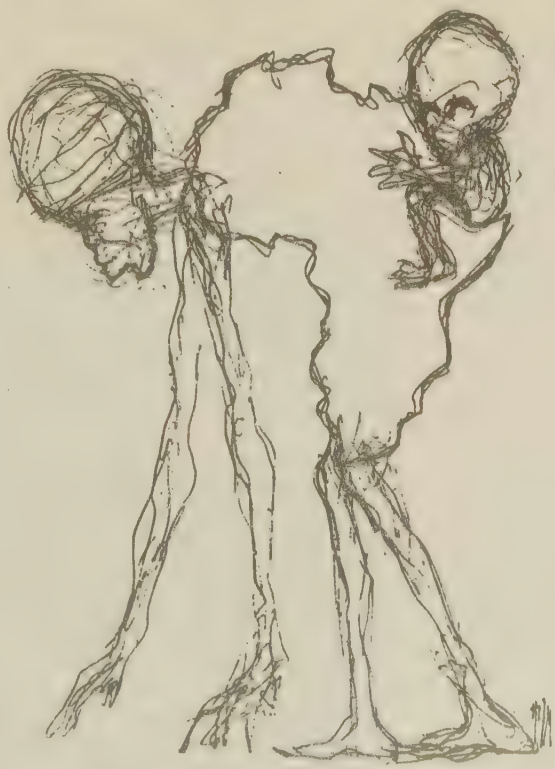
Vladimir Khoros. Exactly so. The concepts, described in our publications and researches as Marxist-Leninist, sprang mainly from a different source. The populist theories of skipping over the capitalist stage, once prevalent in Russia, seem to have been revived in some of the developing countries. The road towards a socialist future was understood as unity round the national leader (usually the president) and the ruling party led by him, all-embracing state control, mass enthusiasm, and the growth of socialist relations in society out of traditional communal collectivism. It soon transpired, however, that the obstacles lying in this way had obviously been underestimated.

Nikolai Karagodin. In the economic sphere, in particular.

Vladimir Khoros. Two main ways of the economic development of socialist-oriented countries can be singled out. One consisted in accelerated industrialization with an extremely high rate of accumulation (35 to 50 per cent of the national income). This was how Algeria and some other countries developed. But this "tightening of belts" led to major disproportions, to slow growth in agriculture and the social sphere, and to a drop in living standards. Another way (Tanzania, for instance) was characterized by considerable investment in the social sphere (redistribution of incomes in favour of the poorer strata, the building of an infrastructure, housing, water-supply facilities, etc.) in the hope that these measures will ultimately help to raise labour productivity and stimulate economic growth.

Irina Zorina. But, as a rule, the expenditure was not paid back, and the money went mainly on consumer needs. Both ways of economic development were hindered by the inefficiency of the public sector, by voluntarist decisions, incompetence and corruption among officials.

Vladimir Khoros. In some of the countries the private sector, including small business, was excessively suppressed, and a direct exchange of products was all but introduced. As a result, output did not grow or even declined, and the black market thrived. Not long ago I travelled through Guinea. Even the purely visual impression was cheerless – poverty and desolation everywhere, heaps of neglected rusty equipment, dirt and shanties in Conakry, the country's capital. All this is the legacy of the nearly 25-year regime of Sekou Toure.



Africa under the burden of hunger and debts.
Drawing from the magazine L'Express (France)

Victor Sheinis. For a long time we believed that this regime was socially close to ours, whereas the people who came to power after Sekou Toure's death called it fascist. With such a liberal interpretation the term "fascism" loses its scientific meaning, of course. However, it would be useful to ponder why we took such a lenient attitude towards tyrannical regimes in the Third World only because they ideologically and politically (though not necessarily economically) opposed the West, especially the United States. Guinea was not an exception in this respect.

Irina Zorina. Such "left" dictatorships, which grew out of the national revolutionary movements in a number of former colonies, proved akin to the Stalin regime.

Nikolai Karagodin. Even discounting all their political excesses and deformations, the socialist-oriented countries could not be regarded as a convincing example of a successful economic development. Most of them are experiencing almost permanent difficulties in supplying the population with food and articles of prime necessity. True, some of the socialist-oriented countries are now trying to get rid of dogmatism. They are boosting the growth of the private sector. Agricultural output is beginning to increase, and former disproportions are being evened out. The measures taken in Algeria could be cited as an example here.

Vladimir Khoros. The recent developments in that country show that this policy has not yet brought practical results. The living standards remain low. There is still an acute shortage of consumer goods. All this is certainly the result of past mistakes.

Political authoritarianism

N.T. The narrow rigid limits of political life also cause public discontent, for the socialist-oriented countries' political systems are similar in many respects. It can even be said that they are uniform.

Victor Sheinis. Quite right. The political situation in these countries is characterized by one-party rule, manipulation of the masses through meetings and demonstrations, populist slogans, ostentatious unanimity and simultaneously, by a very loose link between the authorities and the people, by serious restrictions on democracy and on the political initiative of the masses, or by a complete lack of democracy and public initiative and activity.

Such lack of dynamism in political structure cannot but lead ultimately to grave political crises.

Vladimir Khoros. We tried to overlook overt political authoritarianism in the socialist-oriented countries as we did it in our own country, for that matter. Moreover, to prove that such regimes were progressive we found elements of "social democracy" in them, that is, redistribution of part of the national income in favour of the working people and provision of social rights (the right to work, equal rights for women, and the expansion of public education and health services).

Measures of this kind were, indeed, carried out in socialist-oriented countries. But, firstly, considerable social inequality remained (and often increased), mainly in the form of various privileges for the party and government officials. Secondly, the policy of "social democracy" meant granting of some benefits from above and therefore generated sponging trends.

Irina Zorina. Many leaders of socialist-oriented countries like to talk about the need for "direct" and "genuine" democracy, as distinct from parliamentarian democracy allegedly out of keeping with their national political traditions. They assert that socialist democracy should grow on the soil of communal collectivism.

In fact, the political systems of these countries reproduce the worst elements of their pre-colonial and colonial past.

Victor Sheinis. Perhaps this testifies to limited possibilities of non-capitalist development in backward countries of the Third World.

Vladimir Khoros. I would not say so. In my opinion, the idea of non-capitalist development bypassing the capitalist stage, expressed by Marx and Lenin, though in a very general form, is in principle a productive sociological hypothesis. But it is a long way to go from a hypothesis to reality. It seems to me that the idea of non-capitalist communal-cooperative development has not been seriously tried in socialist-oriented countries.

Take Tanzania, for instance. How were "ujamaa" (the Swahili for "big family") cooperatives organized there? Agricultural cooperation in Tanzania resembled very much collectivization in the Soviet Union. Many settlements were united, in fact, under coercion, into "socialist villages." Communal self-government was completely destroyed and replaced by directives from above, though lip service was paid to communal traditions as the foundation of socialist collectivism. Hence followed failures.

Nikolai Karagodin. Socialist orientation as a phenomenon is apparently in crisis, and it will not be easy to overcome it.

Victor Sheinis. The leaders of socialist-oriented countries should first of all be ready to do away with social utopian deformations and to work out a realistic approach to economic and political problems. A great deal will also depend, in my opinion, on the success of perestroika in the Soviet Union. Our experience can prove useful to friendly countries in the Third World.

N.T. We would like to thank all of you for the interesting discussion.

The round table was conducted by ALEXANDER USVATOV

In a country ravaged by civil war and devastated by Hurricane Joan people need a respite

In December shots and explosions reverberate through Managua from morning till late at night. Rockets flare up in the pitch dark tropical sky.

These are not the contras in action. Literally by the grace of God, December in Nicaragua is a month of religious festivals. They are opened with celebrations to honour the Virgin Mary. People sing hymns in churches and in the streets, set off firecrackers and often fire from machine guns and other arms a lot of which have been distributed among the citizens. Then come preparations for Christmas, followed by the New Year. So, it is not an exaggeration to say that cannonade is heard in Managua throughout the month of December.

Christmas and the New Year, of course, are observed all over the world. But honouring the Virgin Mary, so I am told by Nicaraguans, has been entrusted by God to their country alone. The Virgin Mary (Purisima, the holiday is called Purisima) is the patron saint of Nicaragua. There are numerous legends about her.

One dates back to the times when English buccaneers came to the territory of today's Nicaragua following on the heels of the Spanish conquistadors. They made their forays from a base in Greytown (now San Juan del Norte) on the Caribbean coast. They went up the San Juan River to Lake Cocibolca (its present name is Lake Nicaragua), from where they could easily reach the country's heartland. In the upper reaches of the river the English buccaneers' path was blocked by a fortress whose defendants gave a lot of trouble to the pirates.

One day the garrison commander of the fortress fell gravely ill and could not organize proper defence. His daughter Rafaelia Errera stood in for him. When she saw that the pirates were gaining the upper hand, she decided to save the main treasure of the fortress – the icons – of which the most precious was the Virgin Mary. The icons were put in a wooden box and lowered into the river. Nine days later the box touched the shores of Lake Cocibolca (now Lake Nicaragua). To this day Nicaraguans wonder why the box with icons swam upstream and found itself in Lake Cocibolca instead of the Caribbean. This could only have been the work of the Virgin Mary.

The days of Mary's wanderings on the river and the lake came to be celebrated by popular feasts marked in the calendar

The Sandinistas and the Virgin Mary

as the Purisima feasts. The celebrations consist of three stages. First comes the "novenario" (the nine days), every day celebrated by a separate song about an adventure of Virgin Mary. On the tenth day, "griteria" ("the call") the Nicaraguans greet their patron saint with cries and a lot of noise, and in the evening go to the altar to receive symbolic gifts – wooden objects and sweets – from priests. The celebrations are crowned with church services held on the last day.

Revolution and Christianity

The Sandinista government has proclaimed December 7 and 8 to be days off. Before the revolution, there was no nationwide celebration of Purisima. It was marked in neighbourhoods and individual households, a fiesta mainly for the Nicaraguan elite. It was only after the revolution that the people have been allowed and are indeed encouraged to gather in central squares and make merry. Members of the government also join in the celebrations.

Why do the leaders of the party which espouses Marxism take part in religious rituals? The fact is that the ideological basis that united the broad opposition to Somoza long before the victory of the revolution in July 1979 was not so much Marxism, as "the liberation theology." Readily understood by the broad and none-too-well-educated masses, this teaching called for creating "the kingdom of Christ" on earth and not in heaven. The "theology of liberation" justified the use of violence to get rid of the evil Somoza dictatorship. The anti-Somoza forces brought together in the Sandinista National Liberation Front did not all adhere to Marxism. Even now, the SNLF includes different political trends.

The Sandinistas do have differences with the "official church," but they are reluctant to talk about them and prefer to cite examples to the contrary. For instance, the fact that the government includes members of the clergy: Miguel d'Escoto (Foreign Minister) and Fernando Cardenal (Education Minister). True, some of the Front's leaders did make attacks against the Church which prompted a sharp reaction from the Vatican. There is no love lost between the SNLF and the primate of the Nicaraguan Catholic Church, Miguel Obando-i-Bravo. The Front, however, is making amends. The "official church" has been allowed to do its preaching. The country has a Catholic radio station (Radio Catolica). The Cardinal is mediating in the talks between the government and the opposition.

TASS photo

The SNLF has traditionally close links with the "popular church" which preaches "the theology of liberation." The highly regarded Padre Uriel Molina, and Padre Arias Caldera known as the "Monsignor of the poor" throughout the country, make no bones about their sympathy for the Sandinistas, but they do not stop at criticizing them when they feel it is necessary. Members of the Front told me that many Sandinistas do not mind attending a church service or taking part in other religious rituals. This is not frowned upon.

Altars on Bolivar Avenue

The cities of Managua, Granada and Leon have long vied with each other in celebrating Purisima. In the capital's Bolivar Avenue, right in front of the government buildings various government bodies – such as the office of the republic's president, the defence ministry, the interior ministry, and so on – set up wooden altars on the eve of the feast. In early December President Daniel Ortega and Vice-President Sergio Ramirez spent more than two hours distributing gifts to kids and grownups from the altar: wooden rattles and cookies from cornflour and ginger made in Masaya. In spite of the huge crowds, endless firing of weapons and crackers there was order in the streets and squares. The situation in the country is grave and uncertain, but the crowds were cheerful and merry.

Among those queueing up for a gift was Doña Juanita Cano, who said she was celebrating Purisima in this way for the seventh time. "Ever since one of my sons died in action," says Doña Juanita Cano, "I come here to pray for peace, that there should be no more suffering on this land, no more earthquakes, no hurricanes."

Yuri Kudimov,
our own correspondent
MANAGUA

QUOTATIONS

Towards a scrap heap *Drawing by Vsevolod Arsenyev*

Margaret Thatcher,
Prime Minister of
Great Britain

■ I was very interested in Mr Gorbachev's speech, it seemed to me to go further than any others of his had gone.

You know you can have marvellous generals in politics but you have really got to have the support of the people to bring in the changes which you know have to be made, and those of us who hold responsibility at the top of politics believe we hold our power as a trust for the people.

The people in the Soviet Union will naturally want the highest standard of living. They cannot therefore have so much going on armaments, they want it to come on consumer goods. That is quite a big change, and it needs bold action and persistent action and a lot of people having faith in it and being prepared to do what is necessary to bring about that higher standard of living.

It has been, as you know, very much part of my political belief that whatever the differences across the European divide, we should always try to extend the hand of friendship across it, and that is what we are doing.

Daniel Southerland
(Washington Post)

■ The euphoria brought on by the December 15, 1978, agreement on the establishment of diplomatic relations between the United States and China gave way to hard-going business talks with the Chinese side. These talks have yielded results but have produced few gold mines which many Americans had expected. At the same time, though trade was the principal motive force of new relations, American-Chinese ties are obviously based not on business only. Among the 3,300 or 3,400 Americans living in China there are not only businessmen, but also teachers, students, diplomats and military attachés. In the United States, there are more than 30,000 Chinese students who are familiarizing themselves with American values. The knowledge acquired by them and their experience will, in the opinion of many people, exert a deeper influence on China than anything else... An important role is also played by the slowly expanding American-Chinese relations in the military field, though their long-term effect is difficult to assess. These are not relations between allies, but some experts call them "quasi-strategic."

Dante Fascell,
Chairman of the House
Foreign
Affairs Committee,
U.S.A.

■ In his speech to the United Nations Mr Gorbachev spoke perhaps the most important single sentence when he said:

"We believe that the jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice at The Hague as regards the interpretation and implementation of agreements on human rights should be binding on all states."

The West should move quickly to take up this extraordinary proposal. The 35 signatory nations of the Helsinki Final Act, now in session in Vienna, can adopt language in the Vienna concluding document making this proposal a reality. Such an agreement would, for the first time give the Helsinki process – and its human rights and humanitarian concerns provisions – real teeth. This is a historic oppportunity that should not be missed.

On the eve of the 40th anniversary of the adoption by the U.N. of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Gorbachev recognized the significance of that historic document and declared that "the most fitting way for a state to observe the anniversary of the declaration is to improve the domestic conditions for respecting and protecting the rights of its own citizens." He then enumerated steps the Soviet government has taken and is taking to achieve this goal.

These are welcome words from the Soviet leader. The fact that they have been accompanied by deeds – the release of many political prisoners, the resolution of a number of divided family cases, an increase in Jewish emigration, the end to the jamming of Western radio broadcasts – makes Gorbachev's pledges to improve Soviet respect for human rights and to institutionalize these reforms more credible.

Rajeshwara Rao,
Secretary-General,
National Council,
Communist Party of
India

■ We welcome the main direction of perestroika. However, this does not mean that we should support everything what is written and said in the name of criticism and self-criticism. A bitter polemic on this question is being carried on even in Soviet society. That is why we should see how events will develop further in order to reach definite conclusions.

Four decades and a year

Leonid Medvedko, D.Sc. (History)

The Palestinian peace initiatives put forward by Yasser Arafat in Geneva, President Reagan's decision to enter into direct negotiations with the PLO, and the U.N. General Assembly resolution to convene an international conference on the Middle East open the door to peace.

The session of the U.N. General Assembly at which the leader of the Palestine Liberation Organization set forth its position following the proclamation of an independent Palestinian state in Algiers, became a "visiting" one of necessity. After the U.S. State Department had denied Yasser Arafat entry visa, the session was compelled to move from New York to Geneva. The Swiss authorities did not deny anyone entry visa, but the seat reserved for the Israeli representative remained vacant. As for his American colleague, newsmen reported him ostentatiously "nodding off" in the middle of Arafat's speech...

Learn to respect others

Arafat put forward bold proposals. A U.S. State Department spokesman described them as "interesting and positive" at first. In the same breath he remarked, however, that Arafat's proposals "failed to meet three U.S. requirements," i.e., that the PLO should comply with resolutions 242 and 338 of the U.N. Security Council, recognize the state of Israel, and condemn international terrorism. After Yasser Arafat had elucidated the PLO's stand on these three issues, President Reagan instructed the State Department to start "a dialogue of substance" with the PLO. The U.S. Ambassador in Tunisia lost no time in making direct official contacts with the PLO headquarters there. The State Department explained, however, that this move did not amount to Washington's recognition of the independent Palestinian state. Nevertheless, American observers see it as "the most important move in the U.S. Mid-Eastern policy after Camp David."

Now Tel Aviv is left in "angry isolation." As if in anticipation of Washington's decision, Prime Minister Itzhak Shamir of Israel rejected outright the proposal of the PLO Executive Committee's chairman that the Geneva session of the United Nations be used by Israel and the PLO as an opportunity to start a face-to-face dialogue.

Having recognized the rights of all the parties to the Middle East conflict – including the Palestinian state, Israel and its other neighbours – to existence and security, in keeping with resolutions 242 and 338, the Palestine Liberation Organization held out the olive branch to Israel. To demand for forty years that Palestinians should recognize Israel and to secure this recognition at last – only to deny them the analogous right to have a state of their own provided for by the same international legal instruments is illogical, to say the least. Tel Aviv ought to be more interested than Washington in Palestinians having a home because it is only if they do, the French paper L'Humanité points out, that Israel "will finally cease to be a gendarme of the Middle East and turn into a respectable state" which has learned to respect others.

Forcing an open door...

I am not sure that Washington's "sensational decision" to establish direct official contacts with the PLO is really an "about-face" in the U.S. Middle East policy considering that its next step was to vote at the Geneva session, alongside Israel, against all the five U.N. resolutions on the "Palestine question." There is no denying the fact, however, that the U.S. administration's decision to start a dialogue with the PLO within the framework of the peace process "stems from the long-awaited recognition of long-established reality," a statement of the U.S.S.R. Ministry of Foreign Affairs pointed out. This is a turn towards common sense. Unfortunately, Israel is of a different opinion. Having qualified the United States' direct contacts with the PLO as "treachery," Tel Aviv accuses Washington of having "turned its back on its strategic ally." Israeli politicians are again forcing an open door with the only purpose of slamming it shut again. Tel Aviv has taken an illogical stand which does not only doom Israel to international isolation, but has evoked growing public censure both in the U.S. and at home. Even certain members of the Israel Labour Party are increasingly prepared to meet the Palestinians halfway.

While the Israeli diplomats in New York "turned a blind eye and a deaf ear" to what was going on, representatives of the U.S. Jewish community were taking a good look at, and paying heed to what their Palestinian interlocutors were saying in Stockholm. The results of their meeting with Arafat were recorded in a joint statement. The American opponents of the Palestinians proved quicker than the U.S. State Department to realize that there are "no longer any barriers to a direct dialogue between the U.S. government and the PLO."

Tel Aviv is slowly but surely becoming aware of the fact that the so-called "secure borders" by no means guarantee its security. The "intifada" (the Palestinians' revolt on the occupied territories) cannot be suppressed either by large-scale punitive operations or by aggressive actions against neighbouring Lebanon.

"We rule out terrorism"

Over forty years since the first Arab-Israeli war, the explosive situation in the Middle East has repeatedly erupted into bloody and destructive wars. As the Yugoslavian journalist Ranko Petkovic aptly put it (see New Times No. 50, 1988), the Arabs, instead of "shoving Israel into the sea" were compelled to forfeit a rather large part of their territories in the course of five Arab-Israeli wars. I am afraid, though, that this correct observation may lead the reader to the wrong conclusion that Arab extremism served only to strengthen Israel and to weaken the Arabs themselves. What's more, it can imply that the Palestinians have been

forced into agreeing on a compromise between the Arabs and Israel by the realization that the odds were in Israel's favour.

This is not quite true, as I see it. The efforts of both sides to exhaust one another have resulted in a sorts of "balance of impotence." Throughout these years each of the antagonists wouldn't settle for less than "the lot." Extremism bred adventurism not only in the battlefield, but in politics as well. This only went to put off the solution of the Palestine problem.

The "intifada" has revived Palestine

From Time (U.S.)

Intifada, the Palestinians' uprising which broke out a year ago, marked a milestone in the conflict's history. By adopting Resolution No. 181 the U.N. General Assembly issued a birth certificate to the Arab, as well as the Jewish, state in Palestine. But it was four decades, plus a year of the intifada, later that the Palestinians finally got the chance to proclaim their national state.

The uprising continues... "It will end only after our national objectives have been attained, and our independent national state has come into being," Yasser Arafat told a press conference in Geneva. "We rule out, and condemn all forms of terrorism – individual, group and state... Between Geneva and Algiers we made our position crystal clear."

Continuity

As he proclaimed the independent Palestinian state in Algiers, the 60-year-old PLO leader held up a baby coeval with the uprising as a banner of future Palestine. More than two thousand representatives of the people of Palestine applauded Arafat, their eyes brimming with joyful tears. He reminded them that behind this historic move was the natural and legitimate right of the Arab people of Palestine to the land of their forefathers, and that this right had been exercised in conformity with the international law and with many U.N. resolutions adopted since 1947.

The newly-born state embodied by the baby coeval with the "stone war" was applauded by Palestinians of different generations. Some of them – Arafat himself, for instance – had taken part not only in all those wars, but in tragic internecine conflicts as well. These conflicts are still in progress in Lebanon and threaten to spill over into Palestine...

Those over forty still keep the bitter memories of those wars and internecine dissentions. The wars waged for "the liberation of entire Palestine" ended with the loss or division of its lands. Territorial shrinkage was accompanied by a steady increase in the army of refugees, until their number surpassed the remaining Arab population of Palestine proper.

Young Palestinians under and over twenty rebelled because they could no longer live with the Israeli occupation regime they were born under, and had nothing to lose but their homeland. That was why they gave a solemn oath never to leave their native parts. It is they, the "intifada" generation, who are fighting for their vital rights, stone in hand, under the national banner of Palestine.

Palestine revived

It would be safe to claim that the "intifada" has already revived Palestine. In Geneva, the U.N. General Assembly adopted Resolution No. 54 which rules that from now on the Palestinians' representation in the U.N. should be referred to as Palestine instead of the Palestine Liberation Organization.

The "intifada" has gone a long way towards the restoration of true justice with regard to the Palestinians. The uprising set the stage, so to say, for the correction of the mistakes committed by professional but shortsighted politicians who had spiked and then sabotaged for years U.N. resolutions Nos. 181, 242 and 338. Had they been fulfilled in full and on time, the conflict would not have dragged out for so long.

The parties to the Middle East conflict are coming to realize that neither the security of Israel nor the settlement of the Palestine issue can be achieved by force of arms, and that terrorism cannot be ended by the methods of state terrorism. There is no boycotting the bold and soberminded decisions of the PLO which must have been adopted despite the resistance on the part of extremists within the Palestine liberation movement. Muslim fundamentalists still oppose radicalism to realism. In politics, it is dangerous to use fanatics, blinded by fanaticism, as guides. Extremists are prepared to go to the length of sacrificing their very lives for the sake of their nationalistic or religious ideés fixes. Soberminded Arab and Israeli scientists and policians are gravely concerned about that. "A garrison state inhabited by a steadily dwindling body of Jewish volunteers driven to despair," the Israeli Professor Ya. Rabkin says, "can end up committing collective suicide even if it possesses nuclear weapons."

Moshe Arad, Israel's Ambassador to Washington, referred to the decision on starting a direct dialogue between the U.S. and the PLO as "disappointing and dangerous." Dangerous? To whom? To those who are kindling war conflagration – or to those who are trying to put it out? This conflagration can only be extinguished, and peace established in the Middle East, by the joint efforts of all the interested parties, the PLO included. This, however, takes not only seeing, but hearing each other as well. ■

EXCLUSIVE FOR NEW TIMES

From PLO to Palestine

Our special correspondent interviews **FAYEZ YOUNES,** First Secretary of the PLO mission in Cyprus

What do you expect from the direct dialogue with the U.S.?

First and foremost we want the Americans to at last have a proper understanding of our aims. We want a peaceful settlement in the Middle East and hope to convince Washington that equal participation of all the parties is vital to achieve such a settlement. If successful, direct contacts may lead to an international conference, for which the Soviet Union has long been pressing.

Only a few weeks ago Washington did not even want to discuss matters with the PLO.

They argued that we were terrorists. But one cannot dodge reality. It is plain to everyone that our organization alone legitimately and fully represents the political aspirations of the Palestinian people. Nobody else has the right to speak for Palestinians. Peace in the region cannot be achieved without dialogue with the PLO. All through 1988 U.S. representatives have time and again sought to avoid us and establish links with the Palestinians fighting in the occupied territories. They were told: "You know the address of the PLO headquarters, why don't you go there and talk to our leaders?" I think the Americans have now realized that there is no alternative.

You say the PLO represents the people. In what way? How does your organization take decisions?

We have in our organization people from all walks of life and of a wide range of political convictions. Yet the PLO is democratic and popularist, not only by virtue of its composition. Its steering body, the Palestine National Council, takes its decisions only after lengthy consultations so that every opinion may be taken into account, and a common position acceptable to all worked out. Whenever we cannot reach a consensus, decisions on urgent matters are put to a vote – this was the case at the Council's latest session in Algiers. Of its membership 53 voted for the Security Council resolution, 47 were against and there were 11 abstentions. Thus, a crucial decision was adopted by an absolute majority.

The session proclaimed an independent Palestinian state. What are your plans now?

We now have to decide the frontier issue, and we believe that this can be done only through negotiation. A lot here depends on Israel's position. We recognize as lawful the frontiers the U.N. General Assembly established in its 1947 resolution.

What do you want the basis of relations between independent Palestine and Israel to be?

We want them to be based on peaceful coexistence. We seek peace in the region and will do everything within our power to maintain it there.

Over a year has passed since the uprising in the occupied territories. What have you achieved and what do you want to achieve?

The "intifada" is an unusual form of struggle; it is waged not by an armed terrorist organization, but by the people themselves – by peaceful inhabitants, even women and children. As yet we have not achieved our aim. The occupation forces are still there and human rights are still being violated. Though the people have suffered great sacrifices, they know that these sacrifices have not been in vain and so they are determined to continue the uprising until the time when they can live in freedom in their own land.

Do the Palestinians feel they have the support of the world community?

The sympathy of the world is on our side. We would like all the components for a peaceful solution to the Middle East crisis to be brought into play as soon as possible. This would force Israel to abandon its obstructionism and agree to an international conference. This should consist of the permanent members of the U.N. Security Council together with the parties concerned. The conflict can only be settled in this way – and there are more and more people in the world who are beginning to understand this.

In our editorial mailbag many letters express solidarity with the Palestinian people.

At the most difficult times we have always felt that Soviet people are with us. You can take it from me that Palestinians know how to appreciate the sincere help that friends may give.

Interviewer **Vladimir Kulistikov**
NICOSIA

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The Paraguayan payola

Vladislav Chirkov

What bolsters totalitarian regime? Terror, illusion-spawning demagogy, and pitiful handouts to the masses engendering futile hopes of a better future.

Such is the picture in Chile. And such is the picture in Paraguay where the military dictatorship is further entrenched through corruption.

The mafia appropriates half the GNP. Its involvement in government holds the world record. Everyone in the tyrant's retinue steals and swindles. High-ranking statesmen are mafia bosses as well.

One minister, we are told, appropriated $2 million from a $12-million contract. A project for a cement plant with an annual capacity 650,000 tons was given the go-ahead though only 200,000 tons were needed. The bigger the contract, the more there is to be grabbed.

The authorities are well aware of the country's plethora of "clandestine" heroine factories. Under half of the export-import total is legal: the remainder is contraband. There are even cases of theatre shows being cancelled because someone has nicked sets and costumes.

Paraguay's generals ostentatiously demonstrate their wealth. In the New York Times commentator John Vinocur observed that some of their mansions resemble the White House, some Chambord Castle, some the palace of a Scandinavian king.

The higher echelons are a veritable playboy club. The Minister for the Interior was excommunicated for licentious behavior.

The mind boggles at the degree of impunity. Once two tax inspectors blundered into the doings of General Andres Rodriguez, Paraguay's Number Two, whose son is married to one of dictator Stroessner's daughters. He himself is regarded as Paraguay's Number One smuggler, and his name has been mentioned time and again in connection with drug trafficking. His mafia henchmen beat up two poor tax inspectors, shaved their heads and kicked them out. Stroessner was obliged to recall General Timoteo Alvarenga as ambassador to Taiwan, after his arrest in India on a gold smuggling charge.

Corruption keeps Stroessner in the saddle

Incidentally, the dictators and their hangers-on often get off scot-free after their despotic regimes have collapsed. Embezzler Duvalier is having a good time in France and doesn't give a damn as the suit lodged against him by Haiti's new authorities has got nowhere. Only now has court action been taken against Filippino ex-dictator Marcos and his wife; though the outcome is anyone's guess.

But back to Paraguay. Why does Stroessner need all this? Only, as the opposition Paraguayn weekly Pueblo noted, because corruption serves to cement the entire state structure, as the real ideology of Stroessner's regime. Complicity in crime binds. Corruption is an intricate method of controlling opposed interests. As a national policy, it maintains the balance that serves to keep these interests in check. In short, corruption underpins the socio-political consensus that so effectively bolsters the regime.

The above-mentioned John Vinocur contends that by involving the military in contraband, extortion of part of wages, and plain embezzlement, the dictator keeps them loyal.

This is all repulsive to honest people with strong moral principle who are doing their best to obstruct this national disgrace.

But when an ordinary person, obliged to earn his daily bread by the sweat of his brow, sees the permissiveness the VIPs enjoy, he surreptitiously attempts to follow suit and take fortune by the forelock. Now he no longer opposes the dictatorship: on the contrary, willy-nilly he becomes one of its supporters.

One of Paraguay's few decent-thinking businessmen has remarked bitterly that in his country every treasury note stinks. Stroessner simply prefers to hold his nose. The stench keeps him in power.

Axioms in a changing world

Are class and all-human interests compatible?

Things progressive have always had to assert themselves fighting their way through resistance. This observation applies in full measure to the new political thinking. Some look upon it as a "tactical ploy," "a clever trick" or "a propaganda bait" on the part of Moscow. Others view it as the abandonment of the class-conscious positions and of the revolutionary ideals and goals... Yet others allege that it "aims to check the peace struggle the peoples of many countries are waging."

The class interests, the class-conscious position... The axioms of Marxism. They remain valid but they work in a changing world when habitual things take on an unusual quality.

Our nuclear age has brought to the fore the all-human interest – the interest for the survival of civilization, nations and countries and, naturally, of classes since none of them is a stranger to the instinct of self-preservation.

Of course, the all-human interest has always existed but only now has it become priority No. 1 when the mass-destruction weapons deprived humanity of its immortality.

Today all the states – for the sake of survival – ought to become partners both in the prevention of nuclear war and in the solution of global problems.

In the meantime, the joint struggle for the survival of civilization in no sense requires the abandonment of one's class-conscious attitudes, ideological doctrines and political convictions.

The class interests and all-human interests have no insurmountable barriers between them since they exist as a dialectical whole. In the course of the common struggle for the survival of humanity it is necessary to avoid counterposing these interests and be able to creatively unite them in politics, ideology and practice.

The task of the revolutionary renewal of the world has merged with the all-human task of saving it. Prevention of nuclear war has become an absolute overriding condition not only for the preservation of socialist prospects but also for the survival of the whole of mankind.

I believe it would be in place to speak of a twofold task – at once class-conscious and all-human. Social progress today is only feasible in the conditions of peace. The Marxists formerly maintained, however, that the elimination of class and national oppression would precede the solution of all-human problems. Now they face the question: is it possible to expect successes in the class struggle disregarding the overall situation? Other, no less legitimate, questions arise: is it possible without sterilising revolutionary struggle to move towards non-violent world when acts of violence figure prominently in the contemporary world? What is to be done to ensure in any country the opportunities to carry out necessary social changes without upsetting the equilibrium on the international arena?

Nuclear war would put an end to the entire world development, the class struggle included. For this struggle to be successful, it is necessary to take into consideration the international background, the impact of global problems and the priority of the common interests of the human race as a vital prerequisite for social progress. Only then will this struggle assume genuine magnitude.

The new political thinking and the struggle for peaceful coexistence between all states is not a double-dealing policy. It presupposes restrained and cautious behavior on the international arena and the sense of responsibility in making decisions that affect the interests of other nations, international security.

It in no sense signifies the abandonment of solidarity with the forces of national and social liberation.

The policy of peaceful coexistence has never been static or unchanging. Now, in my opinion, it has entered the most important, qualitatively new phase when social revenge is equal to nuclear adventurism. The nuclear age has laid its imprint on the situation in the Third World, and any regional conflict today is fraught with the danger of escalating into something more grave.

This brings us to another topical question: how can developing countries protect their interests without endangering world peace? What is to be done to isolate the local conflict which could escalate far beyond the region concerned?

While imperialism is around, it may plot schemes against newly independent states or even carry out intervention – an armed one is not excluded – in this or that regional conflict. The experience of the revolution in Vietnam, Cuba and Nicaragua shows that direct clashes with the forces of imperialism or with its placemen at times prove inevitable. While national oppression exists, it will enexorably breed resistance to it.

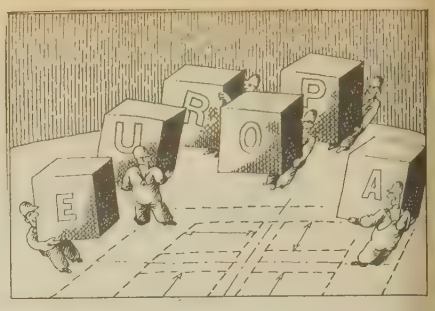
The question is what forms the national liberation movement will take, how flexible the strategy and tactics of its participants will be, whether they will live up to a veritably historic responsibility which devolves on them in the present highly explosive situation.

In the meantime, the maintenance of world peace comes as an overriding condition for the development of newly independent nations. Only within the framework of democratization and humanization of the entire system of international relations can the Third World issues be solved. Only peaceful coexistence on a global scale can create political conditions necessary for the developing countries to ensure their interests, overcome their backwardness and save them from social cataclysms.

Furthering the peaceful coexistence concept, the Soviet leadership has advanced the problems of rights and freedoms of choice and the guarantee of a just balance of interests. If these principles become a guiding force for all, it will be easier to avoid situations and tendencies which could escalate into conflicts and military confrontation. It will also facilitate the search for ways to solve the Third World problems.

Vladlen Kuznetsov

Ideas and models



"Europe must achieve a new unity," was the closing phrase in the article by the leader of the West German Social Democrats, **HANS-JOCHEN VOGEL,** printed in our magazine (NT issue 49, 1988). Here is one of the first responses to the West German politician's article. Discussions on this topic will continue in the following issues of NT

Natalia Dubinina

Creating a model for the future of Europe is more than an entertaining mental exercise for politicians or those who like to make daring predictions, it is an imperative task for the century which is ending and a challenge for the century which is to come.

The unsatisfactory state of affairs today on the continent is becoming ever more clear for all to see. Any procrastination will only go to solidify the status quo and the mentality associated with it. So what do we have now? A continent divided by the two systems of specific ideology, economy and even world outlook. We seem to take it for granted – for so deeply is it ingrained in the mentality of Europeans.

The idea of Common Europe was born centuries ago and survives to this day. Formerly such realities as hostility, wars and feuds, routine everyday preoccupations, put this idea into the background. Now our attention is again focussed on it.

In my opinion, it is the rejection of the present artificial disunity that makes the idea of a common European home so attractive. This idea absorbed the lessons of the past, takes into account the needs of the present and is projected into the future. By its nature it is open to all who would like to work for its development and implementation.

True, Europe has enough real cares without any make-believe projects. It is more than make-believe, however; one has only to look around to see that in all its parts experiments are made to test promising forms of development. Some answers are produced as a result. Few of them, though, win general acclaim all at once, most of them having a clear-cut tentative character, while some are frequently based on outdated stereotypes.

Take, for instance, attempts to build up an exclusive military-political alliance in Western Europe. The idea and, moreover, its realization in this or that form came a half a century or so late. The military and political autonomy of Western Europe proved impossible already after the Second World War, due more than merely to its disunity and economic disruption. The Western world found itself under the control of the United States which assumed "the burden" of stimulating the economic development of Western Europe and ensuring its security. Europe too produced its own initiatives both in economics and politics, which we should in no way underestimate. Politically, however, many of them followed the American pattern, which rests on the confrontational idea. And what is to be done if there is nobody to confront, if security can only be for all and responsibility common? Is it reasonable to aggravate the model of European future in the conditions when the idea of reforming the military-political blocs that have already taken deep root in Europe looks so uncertain?

In the economic field, the approach is more sweeping and bolder since there are much less votaries here to foot the bill for the projects that hold out little or no prospects. The spectre of "Europe 1992" is haunting Europe now. The members of the world community (and primarily European countries) are carefully weighing all the pros and cons, trying to find out what they stand to gain from it. The integration processes present a steady tendency paving the way into the future. At the same time, integration in Western and Eastern Europe alike serves as merely a means to tackle vaster, though specific tasks and certain particular concepts of development. Can a mere dozen of countries, out of 33, claim the prerogative for shaping an economic image of New Europe? Or perhaps the future "single European market" is to become that very link which, on the basis of new forms of cooperation, will unite the formerly disunited European economic groupings (the European Economic Community, the European Free Trade Association, the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance) into a broad and mighty regional economic system?

The outlook for a social model of future Europe looks vague so far. I presume that coming to mutual understanding in this particular field presents the most challenging task. It may well happen that it is multiformity, specifically the multiformity of social development, that will offer solutions to the problems which the optimum model is expected to resolve.

Europe today is looking for its new status, its place and responsibility in the next century. In the final analysis, that model or a combination of models will prove a winner that will ensure the Old World the opportunities for this search.

However, the problem of building a Europe of the future will remain abstract to a certain extent until we answer the question: what in fact does every European need today, tomorrow and in a more distant future? The answer to this question in most general terms is: provided peace and security are guaranteed, every European seeks to live in an open and prosperous society, in a society striving to put an end to injustice and capable of offering every individual the opportunity of making the most of his or her abilities while serving universal human ideals. I don't think I break new ground giving this definition. The new lies in perceiving the conditions which make this goal feasible, with each country (or a group of countries), regardless of the social system they belong to, taking the characteristic features of the environment – natural, social and international – into the fullest possible account. ■

NATALIA DUBININA, Candidate of Sciences (History), Senior Researcher at the Institute of Europe at the U.S.S.R. Academy of Sciences

No visas

An agreement has been concluded which will allow citizens of the U.S.S.R. and the Republic of Cyprus to travel both ways without visas. NT interviews **Igor Khalevinsky,** a participant in the negotiations and deputy director of the Consulate Department at the Foreign Ministry of the U.S.S.R.

Who is to benefit from the new agreement?

As yet, only diplomats. Starting from January 1, 1989, the socalled no-visa policy will be operational and diplomats of both countries will be able to freely enter both the U.S.S.R. and Cyprus. The agreement at present does not apply to travellers with business or standard civilian passports.

What do you see as the importance of this document?

If I had been told five years ago that Soviet and Cypriot diplomats would be able to travel without a visa I would not have believed it: the barriers between the East and the West simply ruled it out. The present agreement is more than just evidence of dynamic developments in bilateral relations, it is the assertion of more democratic norms in the international arena. The abandonment of visas in diplomatic passports is a step towards the building of a common European home, towards confidence and cooperation within it. The fewer the bureaucratic barriers, the more dynamic the contacts between people will be.

Both in the East and in the West they have started to drop "the enemy image" attitude. Is it not the very concept of the visa part of "the enemy image" thing? It may seem strange to you that a consular worker calls for a cut of the consulate service. But the consular service covers a lot more than just passports and visas. Secondly, a no-visa policy opens up new contacts, breaking new ground in the field of mutual relations... Interesting experience in this area has been accumulated by Hungary, which has already a no-visa agreement with the Republic of Cyprus, and also with several other countries.

Late in December the Soviet Foreign Ministry plans to hold a conference of consular workers. What can we expect from it?

The time has come to eliminate some of the lopsidedness that has developed in the functions of the consular service over the past decades. Our aim is efficient protection of the rights and interests of our state as well as organizations and citizens abroad, and also stimulation of trade links and economic contacts... But most important are people themselves, and solving their problems.

We are guided by the ideas of rationalization, simplification and common sense. The Soviet-Cyprus agreement comes as a result of the innovative processes taking place in the consular service, and the conference aims at consolidating and advancing these processes.

... Just one remark concerning myself. I used to contribute articles on Pakistan to New Times and signed them with a pen name so that my judgements could in no way be mistaken for the opinion of the Foreign Ministry! Now open diplomacy has arrived...

Yuri Smirnov, Cand. Sc. (Law), comments on the changes in Soviet visa policies:

These concern firstly the CMEA countries and the socialist states generally. Modified are agreements signed over the 1950s and 1960s with Bulgaria, Hungary, the G.D.R., Mongolia, Poland, Romania and Czechoslovakia as to reciprocal citizen visits. Procedures for processing exit papers have been greatly simplified and reduced. The preferential regime is also extended to spouses of the U.S.S.R. citizens who have taken up permanent residence in various socialist countries. Visits to all socialist countries via direct contacts and commercial ties have been facilitated. (Thus the matter of a specialist's trip is decided once and, hence, to visit or move to another socialist country no second decision need be taken, as only the consent of the specific enterprise sending its employee is needed.)

The U.S.S.R. has signed agreements on reciprocal no-visa travel with Cuba, the K.P.D.R., Laos, Kampuchea and China. Being processed is a multilateral agreement as regards reciprocal no-visa trips for citizens of socialist countries.

Although the Soviet Union has visa agreements with many capitalist and Third World countries the current situation does not measure up with the present time. The wish to intensify business with capitalist enterprises and firms encounters a drawn-out procedure whereby foreign citizens need to obtain visas via Soviet consular offices. However, now a regime for the issuance of open-date visas has been introduced for all involved in joint ventures.

Soviet consular offices have been instructed to issue visas within from two to five days to representatives of firms and to persons directly involved in commercial and economic, and scientific and technological cooperation with the Soviet Union. In the main, all these steps are of a unilateral nature. The U.S.S.R. has called on several Western governments to conclude agreements for the reciprocal issuance of open-date visas and for a simplified entry-exit procedure for businessmen.

Undoubtedly, visa practices in relations between the capitalist countries are better. Thus West Europeans and also U.S., Canadian and Australian citizens may enter any West European country without visas. Similar agreements also operate between the Latin American countries.

Yet it must be noticed that even in such cases the procedures for no-visa trips did not develop overnight and are of a confined nature. Thus the quotas and diversified detailed visa system that exist in the U.S. constrict entry for citizens from the socialist and Third World countries.

■

Why not take a leaf out of their book?

Social security for life

He was sitting on a box with his back to the show window of a sporting goods shop right across the street from the huge, grey cube of the Stockmann department store. Before I saw him I heard the strains of jazz. A doleful tune was wafted up over the rooftops. The day was coming to a close and twilight was creeping up. The brief period between daylight and darkness is fleeting and uncertain, filled at once with hope and despair. The pure sound of the trumpet suited this mood.

It was a one-man band, as I saw when I had made my way through the crowd of listeners. Holding an old trumpet in one hand, he used the other hand to pump air with the help of a rubber bulb into a keyboard instrument; his right foot pressed a pedal setting the time with cymbals. His other foot also pressed something I couldn't see because of the box in front of him.

He had a small stick between the fingers of his left hand and with this stick he managed to strike at the drum or the cymbals. A mouth organ suspended on a wire at the level of his face took over from the trumpet now and again.

A shabby, faded coat, a shapeless hat with drooping brims, and worn shoes did not provide adequate protection from the autumn chill as witnessed by his red nose with a trembling drop on its tip, but there was a twinkle in his dark eyes, and he was obviously playing with gusto. One jazz melody followed another. At the final sound of the cymbals the man, smiling apologetically, turned his eyes to an empty tin standing nearby. Several coins were dropped into it.

Earlier that same day I saw an old crippled beggar near the Marski Hotel in the capital's main street, Mannerheim. He was reclining against a wall, displaying his artificial leg. A mug for alms stood by... On a sunny day in the midst of leisurely weekend crowds in Helsinki's famous Fish Market, where fish is sold straight from the boats and nearby fresh vegetables and fruit, including mangoes and avocadoes, were peddled, I saw a group of down-and-outs. They were under the influence of alcohol and they tried, not too aggressively, to pick up a quarrel with passers-by and called out to each other.

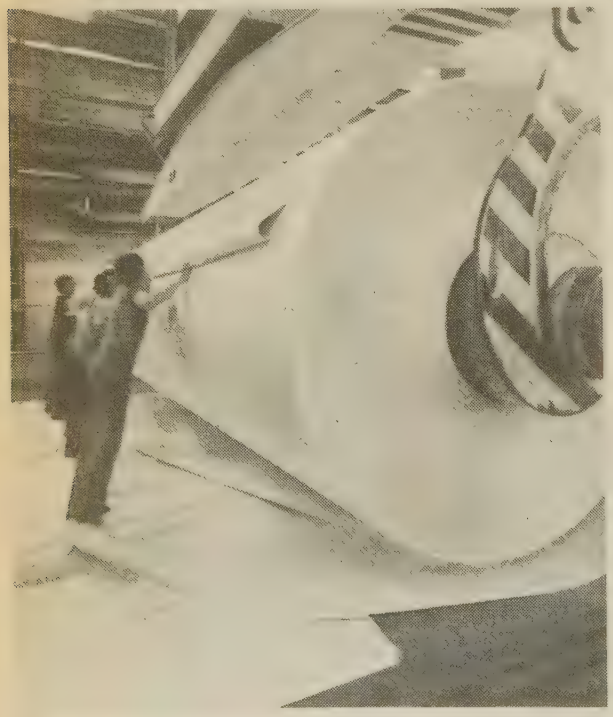
I've drawn these pictures in order to show that even in a prosperous capitalist country there are social ills, big and small. For a long time we have been describing the ills while ignoring everything else. What has been the result of such an attitude? We've become less self-critical, which is bad. There has been growing mistrust of the dispatches our correspondents sent from abroad because the information iron curtain has long grown rusty and fallen apart. We have also deprived ourselves of the opportunity to borrow the experience of others as everything homespun was automatically supposed to be the best in the world.

Let the peoples and countries grapple with their own problems. In the meantime one of our problems is shortage of information about concrete aspects of life abroad. It would be a good idea to learn not only from our own mistakes.

Number one task for the coming years

We have always professed concern for the future of our children. "All the best things to the children" was the catch phrase of yesteryear. The catch phrases somehow obscured the fact that child mortality, kept in secrecy by the Health Ministry, was growing, that the structure of the diet was not up to world standards, that parents were prepared to pay exorbitant prices to buy foreign rather than Soviet-made clothes for their kids.

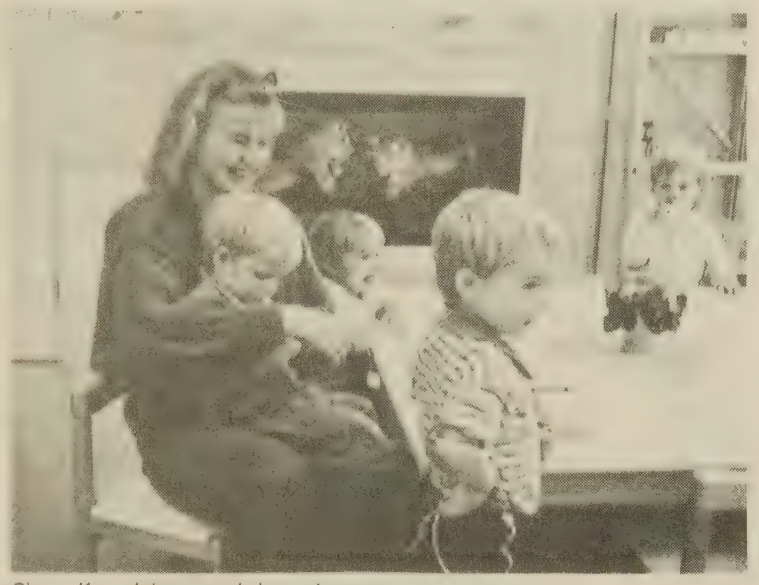
Concluded. For the previous instalments see our issues 45, 48 and 50



Among other things, the new ministry is responsible for creating new jobs

Take child care. There is a gaping gulf between the ordinary kindergartens and those run by government departments. In ordinary ones, as we now know, teachers sometimes tried to make things easier for themselves by opening the windows in winter and thus increasing the number of children who caught cold and had to stay at home. But all this is kid stuff compared to the problems that exist in our Central Asian areas. The inhumane – and shortsighted – practice of cancelling classes and sending children to pick cotton heavily contaminated with pesticides has been repeatedly branded but has not been abandoned... The dramatic incident in Chernovtsy, where the children have apparently become victims of the economic ineptitude of grownups must sound as a warning signal.

And what is the situation in neighbouring Finland? I have written in my previous article about the strict control of the environment and the quality of food products. This is the business of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. The state of the environment is closely linked with the health of grownups and children alike.



Sirpa Komulainen and her charges

Part of the environment where Finland's young citizens are growing up are the kindergartens. Most of them are community-owned although there are some private ones as well. I visited the Portti kindergarten situated in a wooded area. The neat, one-storey house looked particularly attractive on a sunny autumn day. Spacious playrooms, a bedroom, and a canteen.

Young, smiling Sirpa Komulainen did not at all look like a director. She settled all the problems with remarkable ease. Problems do arise among the children and among the predominantly female staff. The children are divided into two age groups, from 1 to 3, and from 3 to 6. At the time I visited the kindergarten, there were 18 children and two vacancies. Parents – factory workers, office employees, teachers – could bring their kids starting from 6.15 in the morning and collect them after work, usually between four and half past five. It is a municipal kindergarten.

Asked how much the parents had to pay, Sirpa gave me a yellow sheet which detailed who had to pay what. A single mother whose child is under three and who earns up to 4,349 marks a month is exempt from payment. So are families of three with a total family income of 5,509 marks, families of four with an income of 6,509 marks, and so on, right down to a family of ten with an income of 10,999 marks. All these families do have to pay for senior children. Thus, a family of three (income under 4,769 marks) with a child aged 3-5 pays a monthly 137 marks if they bring their child to the kindergarten for the whole day and 72 marks if they bring the child for 4-5 hours. The same family would pay 110 and 34 marks respectively for a child of 6-10. But a similar family with an income upwards of 9,557 marks has to pay 665 marks for a child under 3 (full day) and 350 marks (4-5 hours a day), for a child of 3-5 the pay will be 1,096 and 576 marks respectively and for a child of 6-10 – 880 and 272 marks. (The official exchange rate is 4.5 marks to a dollar and 7 marks to a ruble.)

As Tellervo Koivisto, the wife of the country's President, said in a recent interview to the information bulletin Finnfacts, the creation of a nationwide child care system is the No. 1 priority for the coming years. The current law, she said, was adopted in the early seventies, when she took an active part in political life. Under this law some communities had organized day care for all children under the age of 3. The law provides for the establishment of such child care centres in all the communities across the country.

Parents will have a choice

I had talked in detail about child care in Finland with Tarja Halonen, Second Minister of Social Affairs and Health.

"We talk of nothing else but January 1, 1990," said Halonen. "And this is because of me. When I became minister I looked into how our municipalities could improve child care in the families which have children aged under three. The law which will come into effect in 1990 opens two options for them. The first is: you can place your child in municipal day care centres. The second is: you keep the child at home and look after it and get a grant of at least 1,300 marks a month. Under certain conditions, the sum can be as big as two or three thousand marks.

"The state has the money," the minister goes on, "and the scheme would not be difficult to operate. We have already started paying subsidies to parents – the mother or the father who want to stay at home with the child beyond the 10.5 month maternity leave until the child is three years old."

Who provides the money? The government subsidizes you to the tune of 80 per cent of your salary. After that for two-odd years the cost is shared on a 50:50 basis by the state and the community (municipality). You can do what you like with the sum (1,300 marks a month, or more). You can place your child in a private nursery, or hire a baby-sitter, or spend the money any other way. You can do what you like with it, but if you send your child to a communal child-care centre you forfeit the allowance. "We had a heated debate," says the minister, "whether mothers should sit with their children or send them to child care centres. Eventually we came to the conclusion that the families should be allowed to decide for themselves."

How many vacancies are there in child care centres? About 200,000, came the reply.

With a population of under 5 million, says Tarja Halonen, we have an annual birth rate of 60,000. We estimate that by 1990 about 40 per cent of the parents would want to get subsidies and the rest would place their children in child-care centres. The ratio may, of course, vary from one part of the country to another. Many small communities have

already solved the problem, but the situation is more difficult in big municipalities – Helsinki and Tampere, for example.

Today young Finns enjoy a lot of benefits. They include care of the health of would-be mothers and their babies (in prescribing a diet for a pregnant woman, the doctor takes into account everything, including certain products to ensure that the child grows healthy (teeth), medical care of children, and, of course, environment and food quality control. But much has yet to be done. After the first piece of legislation covering the youngest children a programme for older pre-school children will be implemented in 1990-95. Experts believe that if the first programme is a success, further steps should be easier.

For better for worse...

We in the government are currently discussing the possibility of having an expert in psychology or sociology in every big school to help teachers and pupils to get along with each other better, to make concessions and find compromise solutions. Some schools already have such experts, but because they get their salaries from the municipalities and not from the government only the biggest cities can afford to have them. Now we are trying to enable every community to have such experts.

A system of programmes

But is everything so cloudless and is everyone happy with the approach to the "child question"?

Before entering the government, says Tarja Halonen, I was a member of Parliament for ten years, and chairman of the Social Security Committee. And before that I was a trade unionist. Now, two decades later, some of the problems I tried to solve as a trade unionist are still on the agenda. The trade unions demanded higher allowances for children, and higher pay to families with children. We managed to secure a 17 per cent increase in allowances this year and a similar increase next year. That will make a great difference.

The trade unions now call for more vacancies in child-care institutions. Of course funding is a problem. Nevertheless, next year we are planning to create 8,000 new vacancies in child care centres as against the usual 7,000. After 1990, we will review the situation and again enlarge the network of child care centres if necessary.

About a year ago, the trade unions demanded, and the government agreed, to offer benefits to those who have children under the age of four. Under the scheme, parents, if they wish to, can slice two hours off their working day, say, work six hours if they have an eight-hour day. The difference will be partially paid for by the government. The same right will be enjoyed by parents whose children go to the first grade, that is, for the first half a year which is a particularly important period for a schoolchild.

The short term plans, then, will improve the position of the families with small children. What next?

As soon as these programmes are implemented we will pay greater attention to old people, says the minister. An increasingly greater number of people are growing older and by the year 2010 many of those born after the war will have turned 60. We must be prepared for the sharp rise in the share of old people. We intend to expand all kinds of services for them, both social and medical. We assume that most of them will go on living in their own apartments and not in specialized boarding houses. However, in the next decade we will have to build more houses for old people. Perhaps special houses for 80-85 year-olds. Such people have more need of medical care. We would like these institutions to look more like dwelling houses than hospitals. A programme is being drafted to improve the life of adolescents. We call it the "teenager package."

Asked whether all these numerous programmes have a common underlying idea, the minister replied, yes. We have tried to create a kind of social security system for life. We have envisaged various situations: when a person is out of work, falls ill, when a baby arrives, and so on. Now we have a system of assistance to old people, we have programmes for students, for families with children, and so on. Take the following situation. A young woman enters college, fails to find employment after graduation and becomes a mother. All these periods of her life are ensured by different programmes. But when you try to tie them all in, this is not always easy to do. So we are streamlining these programmes and are trying to make them dovetail better.

We consider work to be exceedingly important and valuable in itself, even apart from the values it creates for society. Most citizens think along the same lines. We do not spare our efforts in creating enough jobs for everyone.

...I recall the one-man band collecting money in a can. He is obviously one of the 5 per cent or more of the Finns who are out of work. Of course, there are unemployment benefits. But, as the minister said, for a normal person work is important in itself. And it is good that the Ministry includes it among its concerns.

The Finnish government (like the governments of many other Western countries) doesn't have all that many ministers (not by our standards) – 18 including the Prime Minister. They have no ministers for such "key" areas as machine-building and all kinds of construction. But they have two ministers for social security and health.

Vladimir Zhitomirsky

our special correspondent

HELSINKI–MOSCOW

Photographs by the author and from a brochure of the Social Affairs and Health Ministry

Time to get things going

Alexander Guber

Decrees and other acts on foreign economic activities have been recently published in a single volume. They seem to provide a fairly comprehensive system that can and must facilitate deep changes in all spheres of our involvement in the international economic cooperation. Unfortunately, experience shows that neither the pattern nor the volume of our foreign trade have undergone any serious positive changes. The press reports a growing number of joint ventures, but people do not see any practical results of this.

Now, the U.S.S.R. Council of Ministers has adopted a new decree "On further development of foreign economic activitiets of state, cooperative and other public enterprises, amalgamations and organizations." Its distinctive feature is more definitiveness, unambiguity and radicalism. The decree also lifts some restrictions that until recently have been regarded absolutely necessary and practically unshakable.

Starting with January 1, 1989, all enterprises will have the right to independent economic activities. It is specified, though, that their produce must be competitive. Why the reservation? Other goods just won't sell in the world market. And how the competitiveness will be judged and who will judge it? Anyone but consumer, as has been the case?

Enterprises are allowed to spend part of their hard currency profits on consumer goods, medicines and other things. It will be up to the workers to decide how the money should be best spent.

Starting with January 1, 1991, the switchover will begin to a new rate of exchange for external economic transactions. It has been decided to abolish, though gradually, the system of differentiated currency coefficients, favoured by a number of bureaucrats in the foreign trade department for obvious reasons. The system enabled them to have an important means of leverage: by assigning a specified coefficient to an enterprise they were capable of rendering its export-oriented production either profit-making or unprofitable.

The U.S.S.R. Bank for Foreign Economic Affairs (Vneshtorgbank) is obliged to arrange hard currency auctions where Soviet enterprises will be able to exchange their hard currency savings or buy currency for Soviet rubles. Several months ago I spoke to high-ranking officials of the Vneshtorgbank. A mere thought of something like these auctions seemed terrifying to them then.

We have grown accustomed to the fact that the performance of those at the helm of our economy nearly always trails behind the political will of the leadership.

The new decree provides for set quotas of hard currency deductions to the state and the Soviets on whose territory enterprises operate. For instance, factories that are not directly subordinate to the Moscow City Soviet, but situated in the city will remit to it 5 per cent of their hard currency funds. Half of the currency earned this way the Moscow City Soviet will spend on imported consumer goods, development of health care, environmental protection and culture. The Soviets change their usual role of a suppliant for a full-fledged partnership where each partner receives his due. Not once did I hear chairmen of local Soviets talk to directors of large factories. They were begging for snow-removal tractors so much needed in a city, for asphalting a part of a road... The question of hard currency was never discussed for a number of reasons. Requests for machinery or other things were usually met (after all, these were common problems). As for the currency... A factory's own currency resources were scarce, it could not spend them the way it thought necessary no matter how badly it needed them. Today an enterprise's currency savings depend on its performance, on its ability to produce and sell. And the local Soviet will not have to beg any more. The enterprise will be obliged to remit to it 5 per cent of its hard currency earnings. The Soviet, however, will have a stake in increasing the absolute figure of these deductions and do its best to facilitate the enterprise's foreign economic activity.

A chance to show business acumen

Much of what seemed unthinkable in the past is made lawful by the recent decree:

– foreign currency allocated for a construction project in the U.S.S.R. can go to a Soviet construction organization should it offer more profitable terms and guarantee the required quality;

– the decree abolished the compulsory 51 per cent share of the Soviet side in the initial capital of a joint venture which now can be headed by foreign citizens as well;

– goods imported to the Soviet Union to be used by mixed enterprises are either charged the lowest possible duties or none at all;

– foreign workers pay for accommodation and communal services in rubles (there are exceptions specified by the government decisions);

– extended tax privileges will be introduced for joint ventures in the Far Eastern Economic Region...

The new decree brings perestroika to our foreign trade. Life has shown that sometimes we have to tackle issues that seem to have been solved before, and take them up anew at a higher stage of perestroika. This time, hopefully, we are off to a good start and the results will not be long in coming.

Of myths and reality

Some lessons of the outgoing year

A very good friend of mine Dr Artur Bodnar, a man of considerable tact and erudition, made this observation on having read one of my first reports from Warsaw: "In order to comprehend the ups and downs in the sentiments of the Poles one must have at least a slight idea of the complexities of our national consciousness which is not entirely free of mythological irrationality and idol worship."

I have recalled that observation of one of the leading Polish political analysts on more than one occasion since then, and perhaps more frequently than ever, in the outgoing year 1988.

There have been short-lived myths that entered the public mind in Poland about "oil fields" that held the promise of wealth on a par with that of the Arab Emirates, or about a "second Japan." There have also been more stable, but also transient myths about "selfless aid from the West" or about a "magic guardian," that is the U.S. or the U.S.S.R., depending on political orientation. There are also myths that are part of the national identity like the patron saint of Poland, Matka Boska Czestochowska. These myths are hard to comprehend for anyone not born and raised in Poland and very often they cause misunderstandings, but be that as it may, they are an organic part of the public consciousness and very often determine the line of action taken by individuals and sometimes masses of people.

I would not have dared to dwell on so subtle a matter had my Polish colleagues not done so themselves, the case in point is, for instance, the article "Mity Polskie" ("Polish myths") in one of the December issues of the authoritative weekly Polityka written by Anna Uhlig.

The year 1988 has been one of the most eventful years in Poland's postwar history and it has given plenty of food for thought about, among other things, "Polish irrationalism" and the "demonstration of myths" and the "need for myths in our social life" (Anna Uhlig). Here are some examples.

The slow and unsure transition to the second stage of the economic reform against a backdrop of double-digit inflation and an outbreak of strikes in the spring and summer that spurred on the runaway growth of prices and depleted the stores of consumer goods even further. The opposition's persistent calls for pluralism came at a time when, according to the prominent Polish analyst Daniel Passent, "the West widely believes Poland to be the most democratic nation in the East." The opposition kept on calling for national reconciliation, but at the same time it advanced conditions and made reservations that delayed a "roundtable discussion" involving representatives of all political forces and movements, from those executing power to those supporting the opposition.

Lech Walesa (left) before a TV debate.
Photo from the International Herald Tribune

Optimistic notes

The outgoing year is about to end on an optimistic note, though.

Two events have been marked by Polish public opinion itself as most important and hopeful. On October 13, following the demands of the trade unions that the Cabinet resign, the Sejm appointed a new Cabinet led by Mieczyslaw Rakowski. On November 30 an unprecedented live TV debate took place between the Chairman of the All-Poland Trade Unions Alliance Alfred Miodowicz and the leader of the banned Solidarity organization Lech Walesa, who said later that "the debate was absolutely uncensored and gave both parties to it access to the nation and the world." Both events are unprecedented in the restructuring world of socialism, but what is behind them? Could it be that the appeal of the myth has again prevailed over constructive progress towards national objectives?

The weekly Polityka described the new Cabinet as a "government of hopes and expectations." The makeup of the Cabinet is indeed very unusual. Here is one example. Mieczyslaw Wilczek, the co-owner of a prosperous firm with a multimillion turnover at home and abroad, resigned from a managerial position at the firm and lost a source of considerable income having assumed the post of Minister of Industry. He also demanded in no uncertain terms that enterprises operating at a loss be closed down. Such demands were made in the past, but they were never backed with action and remained part of programmatic documents. The situation is different now and action was taken in support of that demand as soon as the new Cabinet was formed. Suffice it to recall the decision to close down the shipyard in Gdansk and a metallurgical plant.

The connection between words and deeds has been recognized by various sections of the Polish public. There have been clear signs that apathy and mistrust for those in power, the subject of so much discussion over the past seven years, have now begun to grow notably weaker. That view is supported by the results of national opinion polls that act as a measure of public sentiments as far as the top echelons of power are concerned and at the same time hold a mirror to Polish society at large. Only a third of the adult

population showed confidence in the previous Cabinet compared to 72.4 per cent of the population that gave the present government a vote of confidence. The head of the Centre for Public Opinion Studies, prominent sociologist Stanislaw Kwiatkowski said that the image of the new Cabinet is associated in the public mind with Mieczyslaw Rakowski. Seventy per cent of the polled have declared their confidence in him and 49.5 per cent said they liked him. Only about 4 per cent adopted a hostile attitude. I don't think I can recall a government in Poland in recent years that has got such high marks from the people as reflected in polls. That is not only an indication of encouragement and support. The public clearly want the government to show resolve in pressing ahead with the economic reform first of all.

Has Solidarity changed its ways?

The run-up to the second event, the live TV debate between the leader of the official trade unions of Poland Alfred Miodowicz and the leader of the banned Solidarity organization Lech Walesa, saw a great deal of drama and emotional tension. There were disputes as to **where** the debate should take place. Walesa insisted on holding it at the Gdansk shipyard in front of an audience, while Alfred Miodowicz and top TV officials insisted on the Warsaw TV studio as the venue. There was no unanimity as to **who** should participate in the debate either. Solidarity insisted that its advisers take part in the debate, while national television insisted on a verbal duel promising that it would go on the air live.

New Times covered that debate in No. 50/88, but some comments made after it are of interest.

According to the Polish analyst Krzysztof Teodor Toeplitz, an encouraging aspect of what Walesa said was that he tried to incorporate the reforms in Poland in the context of the processes of restructuring in the entire socialist community and above all in the U.S.S.R. and Hungary. Walesa appeared in front of a multimillion audience as a man different from what he was in 1980-81 and that has been pointed out by most analysts. Commenting on the debate immediately after it Daniel Passent said that Walesa was less aggressive and more inclined to striking an accord compared to the radical wing of the opposition. He thereby showed once again that he lost his venom of old and that he no longer spits fire. The seven past years have given him the experience that showed during the debate. According to Krzysztof Teodor Toeplitz, the most important thing about the debate was Walesa's statement that Solidarity must now be different from what it was in 1980.

The significance of the TV debate notwithstanding, many analysts felt that the dialogue between the two popular figures proved incomplete and that some of the arguments were never pronounced. Of special interest in that respect is Daniel Passent's interpretation of some counterarguments that Alfred Miodowicz could use. Addressing Walesa Daniel Passent writes: "You are saying that eight years ago the conditions at home were not right, but were you not really aware of this at the time? Why then the leaders of Solidarity and its advisers, who are on your side now as well, did not have the courage to call a halt because had the country moved farther down that path it would have met with sure ruin? Why have you accepted the Nobel Peace Prize while the job of guarding Poland against a terrible risk was done by others?

"You are saying that not pluralism itself but ways of attaining it are the subject of the discussion. I agree with that, but is there any way towards pluralism other than the one we have taken? As a Nobel Prize winner you are better qualified than myself to judge as to how to introduce broader pluralism in Poland and avoid greater risks."

Perhaps a great deal was not said during the debate and what was said was contradictory, but be that as it may the debate did take place. The emotional atmosphere of that dialogue crucial to Poland did indeed communicate to "the nation and the whole world."

I would have very much liked to end on that optimistic note, but the events of the past few days indicate an alarming trend. There have been street riots in Warsaw, Wroclaw, Lublin, Cracow, Jastrzebie and some other cities. Incited by the activists of the Confederation for an Independent Poland and some Solidarity leaders, young people took to the streets to press their anti-government, anti-Soviet and anti-socialist demands.

The Polish Press Agency had this comment on these events: "Poland is different from what it was in 1981, but the instigators of street provocations have not changed at all. They yell the same slogans full of hate. The young people who were throwing rocks and those who incited them, know full well that their escapades are aimed at the heart of an accord and that they are meant to undermine a round-table discussion of the problems facing the nation. The opponents of national reconciliation have again shown their true face."

For many people the demonstrations in Warsaw, Wroclaw, Lublin and Cracow were alarmingly reminiscent of the events of 1980 and 1981.

The first real steps towards national reconciliation have been made, but obstacles to it are still there, the myths are still alive, and the political atmosphere is far from calm. One would very much like to see more constructive progress towards reconciliation next year so that confidence could take the place of short-lived myths.

Rudolf Borecki,

our own correspondent

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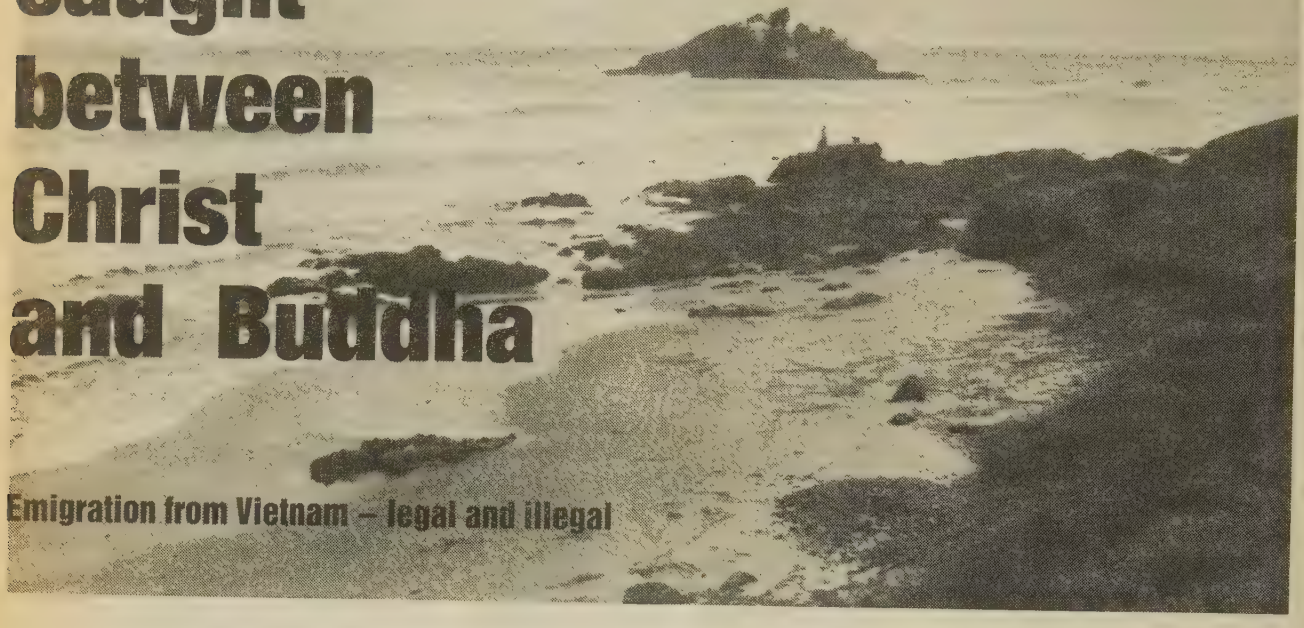
"Boat people" caught between Christ and Buddha



Emigration from Vietnam – legal and illegal

Lev Yelin

...Ho Chi Minh City, 9 p.m. Most of the small privately-owned shops along the street between the Cuu Long Hotel (formerly the Majestic) and the Doc Lap (formerly the Caravelle) were already hidden behind heavy iron shutters. But the one I went into was still working. The people there were preparing to close; a young man with a calculator in his hand was sitting squeezed between Buddha figurines and inlaid lacquer pictures; an old Chinese woman was eating soup behind a tiny round table. (This soup is a traditional Vietnamese dish consisting of everything from beef to pieces of squid). Her face was all covered with a kind of white paint and was heavily made-up. A dead mask atop a wrinkled flabby neck... But the narrow slits of her eyes were sharp and intelligent. They were knowing eyes. May be they knew what I needed to know...

I waved off offers of Buddha figurines, lacquer pictures and jewellery boxes from the youth and came up to the old woman. Would she speak English?

"Good evening. I've got a small problem. Could you help me?"

She did speak English and invited me to sit and join her in supper. To her rather formal invitation, I replied with an equally formal "No, thank you." For several seconds we were silent. Still eating with her chopsticks she studied me intently. I didn't look like a tourist trying to sell something.

"Would you like to buy something in particular?"

"It's information that I want, not merchandise."

"So you've lost your way?"

She knew perfectly well I hadn't. I started to like the rules of this unhurried game.

"No, but I can't contact the people I need."

"You are not a tourist, are you?"

"I'm a reporter writing about the "boat people," those who leave Vietnam for Hong Kong, Thailand..."

"You are an American? Why is it important to you?"

"Time has just carried a report on the 'boat people.' My boss wanted me to do the same, only better."

Competition. This the old woman understood well. She smiled.

"What could I know? I'm here at the shop all day. It's too late for me to start boating..."

"People come to the shop, they talk. How much for instance is a place in a boat?"

"I don't know you..."

"And I failed to make out the number of your shop in the dark. Perhaps it'll help..."

"Ah, those reporters... They say it's two ounces of gold after you get to your destination. One who pays beforehand can never get there. So they say, I don't know anything myself..."

"I'd like to meet those who arrange such trips. Where? That's the last question, and I'd like to buy that sandalwood Buddha over there..."

I pulled out a sheet of paper from my pad and handed it to the old woman together with a pen. She stood up, fetched the Buddha for me and placed it between us. Then she scribbed the price on the sheet, both in dongs and in U.S. dollars.

I bought the Buddha, though this hit my travelling allowance pretty hard. Three lines appeared on the sheet.

"These are restaurants with exceptional cuisine. I highly recommend them."

"Thanks a lot. But I need a place where I can find those who organize this illegal emigration."

"You must have misunderstood me. How could I know about such things?"

The pen went down once again. The old woman rose from her seat, our conversation was over...

After leaving the shop I went up to a brightly lit window. There was nothing on the sheet but the names of Ho Chi Minh City's three well-known restaurants. One of them was underlined, it was the restaurant of the Rex Hotel in the very heart

the city. I thought the old woman had oled me until two more acquaintances that evening – an elderly hotel clerk nd a pretty girl – gave me the same ad-ress. Next day a police officer at the Ho ni Minh City's directorate of internal af-irs confirmed their words:

"It's just a tiny piece of information. ou'll never find anything at the Rex, the ay one gets to the mafia's go-betweens different. But, he added with a smile, I o not mean to say your information is in-orrect..."

* * *

It was not only Time magazine that re-orted about the "boat people" – illegal migrants attempting to flee Vietnam for ong Kong, Thailand, Malaysia on motor oats and junks, some of them only hop-g to be noticed and taken aboard by a estern ship. However, it is to that report at I will refer here.

"It sometimes seems that Vietnam will n out of boats before it exhausts the mber of its citizens who are deter-ined to flee their country. More than one illion, out of a present-day population of 3 million, have left since the end of the ar in April 1975." I won't question the ccuracy of the statistics cited by our estern colleagues. Neither will I choose e trite line of reasoning: Vietnam is right, e United States together with the rest of e Western world is wrong. The emigra-on issue is a delicate problem torn apart y mutual accusations, and apologetic proaches are as harmful to it as acid is linen. In my view, a thorough analysis f the problem is only possible in a umanitarian and humane context. The uotation from the Time report, as well as any other articles devoted to the emig-ation problem are indicative of the old tereotypes and the narrow-mindedness hich the superpowers display in dealing ith problems of less developed nations. he message is quite clear: in the final nalysis the U.S. didn't lose the "dirty ar" in Vietnam, on the contrary, the merican way of life and her ideology ave won. The Vietnamese are fleeing to merica...

The American involvement in the Viet-am quagmire started with similar tereotypes and narrow-mindedness. he superpower's view of a less de-eloped country was totally out of focus, nd schemes that objectively were ound to work failed...

America did lose the war, and the "boat people" of today are no more a token of ts victory than the scars of American ombardments which here and there dis-igure the Vietnamese landscape. The superpower attempted to bring its ways nto the ancient Buddhist temple, and by military might, but was cast out with ig-nominy from the ancient threshold. But after the two cultures, two religions, two systems of values had clashed in battle, even the victorious side became gravely wounded.

* * *

At the restaurant of Ho Chi Minh City's Cuu Long Hotel I got acquainted with an American journalist representing one of the U.N.-sponsored relief programmes to underdeveloped nations. Peter, in his early sixties looked like a film image of a French colonial colonel, and sheer curiosity moved me to join him at table. It later turned out that Peter had never been a soldier, nevertheless he was an expert on Asia and had spent many years working in Bangkok. However, war very soon became the topic of our conversation.

"It is inevitable that when literally tens of thousands of typical American boys came to this country, with all its specific cultural characteristics and non-Western values, an indelible mark would be left. It was not bombing and fighting alone that mattered. You see, these young Americans could not care less for local ways – they were more interested in booze and girls. They had money – and they were spending it. Here, in the South, they were corrupting the traditional way of living as the French had done before them. After the war had ended, many Vietnamese just couldn't cope with their new life... In Georgia, where I'm from, there are thousands of Vietnamese, and they are pretty well off. The American farmer is spoiled and lazy – and the Vietnamese are hard workers..."

But even Peter, who railed against stereotypes – American in Vietnam and Soviet in Afghanistan – could not do without them. For the ethnic Vietnamese life in the U.S. is just OK by American standards mostly. In Hanoi, Bic, a 50-year-old painter, told me of a typical tragedy resulting from Vietnamese living in the West: the children have to work hard, and their old parents see very little of them. It's a perfectly normal situation for a Westerner, but not for a Vietnamese. Sometimes old people even apply for a permission to return to Vietnam to live with distant relatives back home. The French and American influence was enough to isolate a family from society, but it takes much more to break historic and family ties. In my opinion, however, these situations are not painful for all Vietnamese without exception.

* * *

At the editorial board of the Hanoi-based Lao Dong newspaper they showed me samples of the VOA broadcasts beamed to the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, for example: here is a Vietnamese man who left his country three years ago in a boat. Here's his job. Here's how much he has in his bank account... I believe the story is true, such instances abound – besides, relatives who had emigrated earlier traditionally support the new arrivals and even buy their passage. But while speculating on purely economic guages of success or failure American and West European journalists should not forget that a small nation which repelled the Mongol onslaught as early as the 13th century and already in this century defeated two Western powers, has other values as well...

The Vung Tau coast. Here 500 illegal emigrants were intercepted by border guards

In the northern province of Thai Binh they proudly told me that those who hoisted the flag of victory in Dien Bien Phu, captured Saigon, and even the first Vietnamese cosmonaut were all of local descent.

At the Nguyen Xa village council they reminisced how local guerrillas had shot down two American planes and

how during the time of the war with France Ho Chi Minh had awarded the village with a banner bearing the inscription "Model village of the Resistance."

Now very few people emigrate from Thai Binh – the peak of the emigration coincided with the French pullout. Those who accompanied the French, were mostly Vietnamese who had earlier converted to Roman Catholicism (another very complex example of a crude intrusion into an ancient culture). Local people continue to attend Sunday services at a Catholic church built by the French in 1893 which today is being engulfed by the advancing jungle. But most frequent a Buddhist temple nearby.

The low emigration rate from Thai Binh is of course explained by the approach of the local authorities who are doing their best to upkeep peasants' interest in their work and encourage small family-owned farms. However, it's time we analyzed the reasons for, and the history of the emigration from Vietnam in greater detail, and also its periodic fluctuations.

* * *

In 1975-76 those who had been closely connected with the Americans or their Saigon puppets fled the country. These were officers and bureaucrats. Even today a significant number of former officers of the Saigon regime choose to emigrate after their release from the "re-education camps" (1091 people were released in 1987)...

In the mid-1970s people from the middle classes fled the country in thousands, many of them being of Chinese descent. Early in 1975 Saigon was rumour-striken: people of means who had been generally successful under the Americans should expect a "bloodbath"; women would be forced to become wives of war invalids, the soldiers of the North; Vietcong people would be having fun pulling out the manicured nails of the local beauties, and people all over the world saw documentary footage showing mobs of Vietnamese storming the gates of the U.S. embassy in Saigon in the hope of getting out by chopper...

The second wave of emigration peaked in 1978-79. 60 per cent of the refugees, in other words some 50 thousand people, were the ethnic Chinese. At the political education department of the Ho Chi Minh City party committee I heard the following version of the situation that took shape at that time:

"Not without an outside influence there appeared rumours that Vietnamese authorities were planning to deport the ethnic Chinese (there were half a million of them in Ho Chi Minh City alone). We tried to persuade people to ignore the rumours, but to no avail... They did emigrate – to countries other than China, however. Our own mistakes also were instrumental in rousing this wave of emigration. In these years, while trying hard to re-educate the middle classes, we acted somewhat hastily and often failed to correctly determine a person's social position. Our attitudes towards intellectuals of the old school here in the south were not without faults either. The party has never distinguished between the old and the new intellectuals, but some local bureaucrats denied the "old-timers" the right to worthy employment. As a result, we were confronted by a serious brain drain...

We have corrected our mistakes. For example, many former military doctors, officers of the puppet Saigon army, now head our hospitals...

They explained to me that since 1986 the main reasons for the emigration have been economic and not political or social. The country's economic difficulties, declining living standards, move some people to emigrate – moreover, every third family in Ho Chi Minh City has relatives abroad. They send money and presents, younger people grow accustomed to regard foreign lands as a paradise where everything is in abundance... Most of the people try to solve their problems by legal means applying for exit permits...

A 20-year-old student from Hanoi helped me understand some major reasons why young people emigrate. Anh (the girl's name) lives near the Silk Street, the city's main shopping artery. The young people there, so she told me, are infected by love of money and dream of a sweet life elsewhere. It is in the Silk Street that one can hear the words that staggered a friend of mine, a reporter from the Literaturnaya Gazeta: "America is number one!" (American bombardments had once razed Haiphong to the ground). Young people from the Silk Street often want to emigrate – and as quickly as possible, which means illegally. They are not alone in this: unemployed college graduates and ex-servicemen also share this dream.

* * *

Pham Tam Long, Deputy Minister of the Interior, was frank and informative in his interview. After I referred to Vietnam's "new policy," much talked about by the Western press, he nodded agreement:

"Since January 1, 1988 we have arranged 159 flights which took 19,327 people out of the country, 10,339 of them were Vietnamese who had cooperated with the puppet regime, 7,084 – ethnic Chinese, 1,416 people born of mixed marriages with Americans, 31 – with French. Of these 12,595 headed for the United States, 773 – for France, 1,389 – for Australia, 1,300 – for Canada, and 591 – for the F.R.G. However, many people are still waiting for exit permits. We try to help them, but our national air company just isn't capable of dealing with so many flights. The American immigration au-

The Rex Hotel in Ho Chi Minh City. A meeting place for the mafia?

horities keep pressing us and voicing dissatisfaction. I think it's propaganda, not human rights that they are after. As a matter of fact, they carefully select those "eligible" for entry to the U.S. and keep out those who are not, while having the audacity to criticize us for not issuing more exit permits. (In recent months Ho Chi Minh City newspapers started to publish lists of those permitted to leave for the U.S., but refused entry visas by the Americans.)

Nguyen Phi Tuyen, Head of the Consular Section at the External Relations Service of the Ho Chi Minh City Council said western immigration authorities usually examined the cases of Vietnamese applicants for six months to a year. His estimation is that some 40 per cent of Vietnamese permitted to leave by the local authorities are still waiting for entry visas.

The Consular Section handles those who have already received exit permits from the Ministry of the Interior. It establishes contacts with the host countries, makes travelling arrangements and prepares the necessary documents. Its services are inexpensive – 6,000 dongs. Today 2,000 to 2,500 people turn to the department for help every month.

What are the emigration rules? Private trips abroad for a hospital treatment, to study and to visit relatives are all permitted. To emigrate one needs a formal invitation from the closest relatives, that is from parents or children. Invitation from a brother or sister is not valid...

* * *

Exit restrictions, even when they are historically reasonable or have a logical basis, remain restrictions all the same. But in the Vietnam of today the authorities are doing their best to facilitate exit procedures and make them more democratic. I couldn't help thinking: it's only 13 years since the war ended. And how many long years did it take for the Soviet Union to start speaking of more liberal emigration practices since the time of the civil war? My Vietnamese collocutors often remarked: "But in your country also..." I nodded agreement "Yes, of course..." And the crimes connected with illegal emigration in Vietnam, are they not of the same nature with the hijacking we had at home?

Mai Tu, head of the department of visas and registration attached to the Ho Chi Minh City directorate of internal affairs, specified the grounds for refusing exit permits. Formerly active counter-revolutionaries not reformed by the re-education programme and people whose relatives abroad participate in reactionary anti-Vietnam groups are usually refused exit. In both these cases emigration is not desirable for security considerations, however, in practice a mere one per cent of such people are refused permission to emigrate. Moreover, the refuse is not final and the case can be reconsidered in future.

Naturally those who are under investigation or in prison cannot emigrate.

Up to five per cent of engineers and qualified personnel working for leading branches of the national economy are refused as well. A person whose knowledge and skills are thought to be necessary for the state at the moment can be kept in the country for a while. The same applies to students who have not completed their studies...

Refuseniks constitute a narrow margin of those who attempt to leave the country illegally. Most of the illegal emigrants are people who have no legitimate grounds for leaving (no relatives abroad), or cannot wait for official permission.

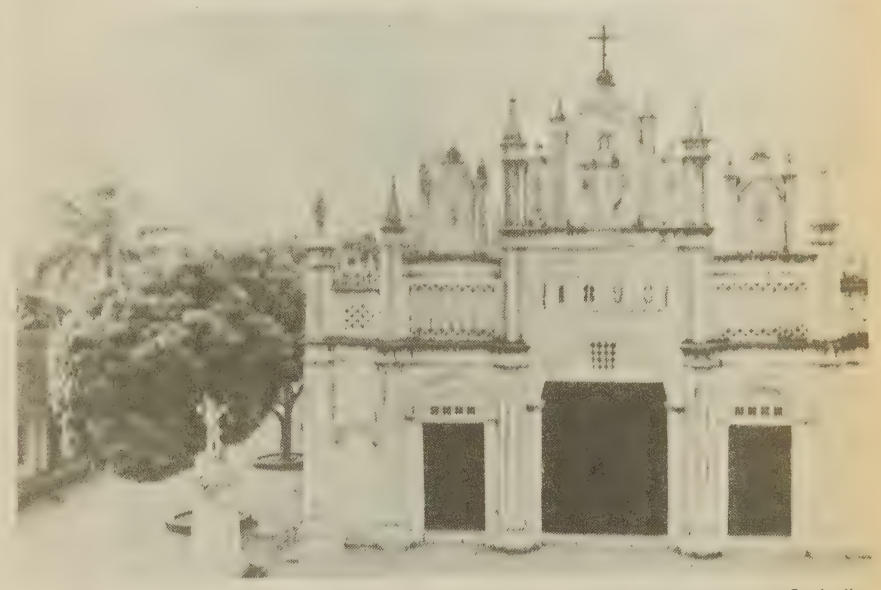
* * *

It's hard to tell how many "boat people" there are in the country. Tran Cuong, deputy head of the Ho Chi Minh City directorate of internal affairs, cited some statistics: since April 30, 1975, 69,272 people have left the city illegally, 23,630 were apprehended when attempting to leave the country, and 5,262 of them were identified as group leaders. The latter, as a rule, face the trial on charges of organizing illegal groups. The usual sentence is 3 to 7 years in prison. As to the passengers, they are not persecuted, but promptly returned home and placed under supervision of local law-enforcement authorities.

There are certain regularities in organizing shuttle trips for the "boat people." Usually there are two main people involved: (A) the owner of a boat or a junk, and (B) his companion who buys food, fuel and navigation equipment. A and B as a rule divide places in the boat evenly between themselves and then collect travel fares from the passengers each in his half of the boat. The fare is two to three ounces of gold ($450 an ounce). It used to be the practice to pay beforehand, but this gave rise to much swindling and the practice was abandoned. Today one either pays half the fare in advance or all the fare on arrival. The departee writes a letter to relatives at home, informing them of a successful arrival, and they meet representatives of A and B and pay the debt.

Corrupted border guards are known to assist the "boat mafia."

These criminal groups are numerous and between them is fierce rivalry. They depend for their reputation on the references of those who left with their assistance and letters to relatives in which the "boat people" describe their good or bad trips. Though the fare in gold is specified in the letters as well as the whereabouts of the "boat mafia" people, these things are kept secret and confided only to relatives or closest of friends who are determined to leave. It is well known that mafia go-betweens frequent the Rex, but more accurate information is unaccessible...



A Catholic church built by the French in Thai Binh Province: many Vietnamese Catholics emigrated after the French pullout

* * *

In a preliminary detention ward of a Ho Chi Minh City police station I interviewed Nguyen, 33 (I was asked not to reveal his full name since the accomlices he had named were still free). Nguyen had business with the "boat people."

Nguyen, a carpenter by trade, first participated on an illegal boat trip in 1981. A relative, previously convicted for similar offences, introduced him to the group's leaders. Nguyen was assigned to fix the boat and its engine. The owner of the boat paid him a sum of money, and Nguyen hired help. Nguyen also selected 10 passengers and collected his 20 ounces of gold.

All in all, there were 7 to 8 people in the group. A couple of people bought fuel and

tools, and one or two more were responsible for taking passengers to the departure point. The owner of the boat got fares for half the boat's capacity (usually 70-80 people, sometimes a hundred were taken on board), the rest of the group were paid according to the part they played.

Passengers were assembled in a specified place near Ho Chi Minh City, or within its limits and then taken to two separate departure points down the Saigon River, the standard place was near the Rach Gia bridge. There they were picked up by the main boat. The group Nguyen belonged to made four trips – twice to the Philippines, to Malaysia and to Hong Kong. The fifth route was not agreed upon, since Nguyen was arrested while fixing the boat.

Do all the trips end well? Nguyen never made trips himself, but he heard of a number of tragedies at sea. Their own boat on its way to the Philippines was caught in a storm in which 48 people perished. During the last trip – also to the Philippines – the engine broke down and they had to wait for several days to be rescued. Fortunately for them, a U.S. Navy ship took them aboard...

* * *

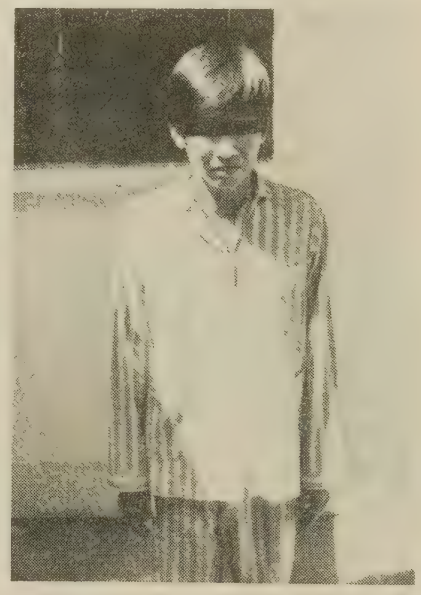
This year U.S. Navy ships rescued over 200 "boat people" who were suffering from hunger and dehydration. In summer, there was a scandal when the captain of a U.S. naval vessel refused to take Vietnamese refugees aboard (U.S. Navy rules leave it to the captain to decide whether or not people in a boat need help). It was later revealed that there was cannibalism on that particular vessel. The captain was relieved of duty during the investigation.

A group of "boat people" who had left Ben Tre in southern Vietnam were at sea for a total of 37 days during May and June! They were rescued by Philippine sailors. Of the 110 only 52 had survived. Later the refugees told that former Saigon officers were killing the sick and offering their bodies to the starving passengers...

"It's hard to say how many 'boat people' die," said the deputy head of the Ho Chi Minh City directorate of internal affairs."Tragedies occur both in the typhoon season, and during the calmer seasons. Often there are pirate raids, especially off the coast of Thailand. There is murder and rape."

Trong, aged 37, from Ho Chi Minh City, attempted to leave Vietnam in July 1987. He said he would never allow himself to take risks like that again. The boat with him and 30 other people on board was heading for Malaysia (from where Trong wanted to get to Holland where his sister resides) when the engine broke down and they spent hours trying to fix it. Fortunately, this happened off the Vietnamese coast and a border guard cutter picked them up and took to the nearest security department. The women and children were let go at once, Trong said. He was kept there for a month and then for two more months at the city directorate of internal affairs. When the authorities had ascertained that he was only a passenger and not a member of the gang, they released him also.

Trong still hoped to emigrate, he didn't even make an attempt to hide it from the



Every trip brought Nguyen 20 ounces of gold. Investigation continues

Ho Chi Minh City security officer who had arranged our meeting. But only by legal means...

* * *

The route to Malaysia, which Trong had mentioned, is today the most popular one among the "boat people." This is not because it is safer, but because in January Thailand tightened its policy vis-à-vis Indo-China refugees to be followed in June by Hong Kong. Thailand, which has over 400,000 people in refugee camps, declared that she will not let any more "boat people" in. They may not be allowed to land...

Authorities in Hong Kong (16,500 refugees) ruled that refugees shall be "sorted out," and those who have no proof of having been persecuted at home on religious, political or ethnic grounds shall be considered "illegal immigrants." In practice this means that over 90 per cent of refugees will be amassed in camps very much akin to penitentiaries. Subsequently Hong Kong intends to deport them back to Vietnam. Will the Vietnamese side accept these people?

"Yes, we will," said the Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs of Vietnam. "There is already an agreement for the repatriation of some 10,000 refugees. The only condition is that we accept only those who want to return. Why keep people who will try to leave again and again?

"We are not going to punish anyone of the returnees," he continued, "we sincerely want to help them settle here. I think in this aspect Vietnam could expect assistance from such international agencies as the Office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees."

I wanted to see the places where the "boat people" normally start their trips. It turned out that such places were really numerous. These are the coast of the Tien Giang Province. The village of Duc Hoa on the Saigon River, a mere 40 kilometres from the Ho Chi Minh City enjoys similar notoriety. Often the refugees contrive to get into foreign ships in ports. In 1982 there appeared first routes to Thailand via Kampuchea, and in 1985-87 these routes became extensively used.

From 1975 to 1982 most of the illegal routes out of the country started at the sea resort of Vung Tau 120 kilometres southeast of Ho Chi Minh City. Since then oil has been discovered there, and there has been a sharp rise in the population, with the number of "boat people" dwindling, as they prefer quieter spots. Nevertheless, two days prior to my arrival the border patrol intercepted a boat containing a total of 500 people aboard. Local people showed me the spot – very close to the main beach, and then an old fisherman at a privately-owned restaurant drew me a map of the mafia's favourite places marking them with crosses. I visited all of them. One of the places staggered me by its pronounced, even crude symbolism.

...High on a hill a tall statue of Christ, erected by the Americans in the sixties, towered over the ocean. A hundred metres from it, separated from the hill and the statue by a stretch of sea, there lies an island with a Buddhist temple on it.

"Here in the south, Christ and Buddha are in constant confrontation," said my Vietnamese guide...

HANOI–THAI BINH–
HO CHI MINH CITY–VUNG TAU

Photos by the author

From Barcelona with anxiety

Leonid Ionin

Most of us Soviet people think of Spain in terms of El Greco, Goya, siesta, corrida, the Civil War, Koltsov and Hemingway, the Francoist rule...

To us, Francoism in Spain means a black hole in its history. To the rest of the world, Stalinism in Russia means the same thing. In one of his novels Vladimir Nabokov describes the mysterious and sinister land of Zorlandia buried in snow. This is Russia which has withdrawn from the normal world into some other dimension of social being. Perestroika means coming back to normal, to common human ideas, rules, criteria and norms. The Spaniards are busy doing their own perestroika which began in the late seventies, after the death of their Generalissimo. This probably explains why to them and us alike democracy is not a primordial "political environment" taken for granted, but something attained – or still being attained – the hard way and therefore taken loving care of.

Such were the thoughts that crossed my mind in Barcelona as I listened to speakers in the conference hall, relaxed in the hotel lounge, or strolled down the palm-lined Avenida Diagonal occasionally running into a sightseer sporting identification plates like mine which said that they too had come over for the international colloquium "Models of the Future, New Technologies and the Cultural Tradition." The next Olympics are scheduled to take place in Barcelona in 1992, and the colloquium in question – "intellectual Olympics," as it were – was held in November 1988. We discussed prospects for world development: the advent of the information science era, new utopias, the destruction of social traditions, the emergence of the technopolis – the global city, a miracle of cosmic proportions.

I got the impression that the atmosphere at the colloquium was not that of confidence and triumph but rather that of uncertainty and anxiety. Scientists are not Olympian gods, after all. Ordinary mortals, they are not endowed with prophetic faculties. Once people used to have much more faith in science, and scientists were more self-confident too. They shared their visions of the future, believing themselves to be clairvoyants, with the public awe-stricken by the prospects opening up before it. Revolutions promised a paradise on earth, an end to all previous history and a new era; and the popular masses, inspired by the philosophers' dreams, went into battle for a radiant future.

As they materialized, sweet dreams degenerated into nightmares. The consequences of revolutions, these social earthquakes which shake loose the very foundations of a people's life, often proved unpredictable, and the toll of human lives which they took ran into millions – more than even the worst natural calamity can do.

Instead of the heights of the future we have landed in a yawning precipice.

That, among other things, was the subject of reports and learned discussions. At this point I might as well take a closer look at Barcelona University which organized the five-day symposium, at other organizations which attended it, its agenda, and at those who addressed it. But I'll leave all this to scholars and confine myself to my personal impressions.

The twentieth century with its tragedies and countless victims of social upheavals suddenly brought into focus a value which has become a rarity in the world. It was this value that Merab Mamardashvili from Georgia meant when he said that mankind suffered under all kinds of models, projects and programmes for too long; that all of them look too humane and bright, but when realized they become sources of coercion, violence and ruthlessness. The thing now is to renounce all the clichés and to recognize every individual's right to live and die as one thinks fit.

"To live and die as one thinks fit" is a new commodity now in short supply. I have put these words in quotes because I remember them word for word. The rest I can only just paraphrase, and if Merab reads them in Tbilisi he is welcome to send in his corrections.

Later, after the session, as we walked under the palms in the evening, he said: "Do you know what it means to live somebody else's life? It's weird to wake up in somebody else's nightmare... Not in your own, when you feel rescued after awakening, but in somebody else's which you – and anybody else – can't get out of..."

I understand, I nodded. Today I myself can't, for the life of me, believe that in the Barcelona palm-lined avenida under the starry southern sky the charm of which could not be blurred by the flashes of car headlights and neon signs I felt the chill of the Moscow street of Boris Yampolski's novel that recently saw the light of day, that bleak unlit icy street, where a man feels like a hunted-down animal in his futile attempts to break out of the vicious circle of another's nightmare.

On this note I might perhaps sum up my Barcelona impressions. I shall follow up in one of the coming issues of the Diary.

SPECIAL FEATURE

An SOS that went unheeded for 34 years

The story of the tanker Tuapse and what happened to her crew

So events bring us to 1955. Following the declaration of their resolve to do all they could to get back home, fourteen sailors found themselves behind bars in a Taiwan prison. Among them were Valentin Kniga, Vladimir Sablin, Boris Pisanov, three more men who later died, and Vsevolod Lopatyuk who is still on the island. The seven men were refused exit from Taiwan. Why the Taiwan authorities made this particular decision then remains a mystery. The facts, however, speak for themselves. By that time five crewmen from the group, who were sent to the United States, had returned to the Soviet Union; four of those who left for Brazil had done the same. The Taiwan authorities presumably decided not to release the rest of the crew.

Living in prison

The first year of maltreatment and torture we spent on death row – the jail for political prisoners at the centre of Taipei – and three more years in the suburb of Xingbeitou in a camp, Valentin Kniga recalls. Then three years in jail in the locality of Taoyuan followed by the Xinzhu camp for five years. We spent the remaining term in Yilan. Four months before we left for our homeland we were transferred to the Hualian military base. Every day we listened to the wireless, trying to catch a report about ourselves as we didn't believe we could have been forgotten.

The Taiwanese constantly offered to teach us Chinese and English, tried to persuade us to work and even wanted to install lathes in the barracks. But the sailors would persistently refuse to take any offers which, as it seemed to them, could make them "full-fledged citizens" of the island. Loneliness and isolation from home appeared the hardest things to bear. To make matters worse, beginning at the Yilan camp, the prisoners were divided into two groups which could not communicate with each other until the last moment when they were put on board a plane headed for Singapore. They were allowed to take trips to town but under a two- or three-man police escort. Each group was guarded by 35 men who were relieved every three-four years. Valentin Kniga told us that at first they tried to strike up a conversation with the owners of numerous small shops on the streets only to notice next time that the people they had talked to now avoided their company. Not because the authorities frowned on it – they themselves refused to mix.

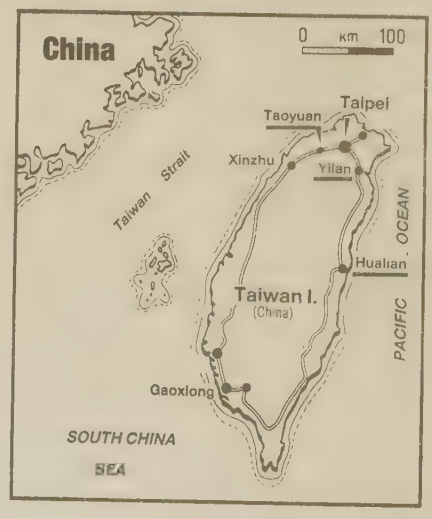
Once four of the captives got permission from the authorities to go fishing unescorted, and this is what came of the outing...

"It was in 1968 when we lived in Yilan. The camp was located right on the shore. We (the story was told by Valentin Kniga – **Authors**) together with Kalmazan, Dimov and Pisanov, walking along the edge of the water, caught sight of a moored fishing seiner. It immediately dawned on us to try and escape. I got into the engine-room and found the defect in the engine, an easy enough job for me, as I was a mechanic on the Tuapse. The fishers might have been unable to get home and moored it here. We sized up the situation and a little while later the defect had been fixed. In our estimate, the fuel would last us for a hundred miles or so, which was quite enough to get to the continent. But fog was lying thickly around and, besides, we were well aware that coast-guard vessels were continuously patrolling the entry to the harbour. In short, the success of the venture looked doubtful. After all we decided to give up this attempt and agreed among ourselves not to say anything about it. Otherwise, the authorities could put us behind bars again if they learned of our escape attempt."

They always wanted to find some occupation, some hobby or work to keep them busy and not to think of their misfortune, but at the same time, without turning for help to the Taiwan authorities. All the more so as the death of their three friends took an ever tighter grip on them psychologically with the years. They could find a variety of diversions during their years there. Valentin Kniga, for instance, on one of the many boring evenings, sorting out junk containing cigarette-lighters, tried to fashion something out of them. At first, he managed to design something distantly reminiscent of aircraft models. As time went on his skill developed.

In the end, he had a large collection of beautifully made models that were tiny imitations of the aircraft sited on the airfields near the military camps where they were kept. Unfortunately, the authorities did not allow them to take these "toys" across the border...

They had never given up the hope of returning home. They got into the habit of writing petitions to the Taiwan authorities demanding their release. They managed



The places where V. Sablin, V. Kniga and B. Pisanov were held for 34 years

Continued from our previous issue

to bring back the copies of all these documents, about 30.

During the conversation with the sailors, the question of the tanker Tuapse came up of its own accord. We could hardly believe that it still existed, but to our surprise it turned out that the ship is to this day moored at the Gaoxiong port. Its bilge had been filled up with cement. They had left the metal letters Tuapse on the vessel, and it stands covered with tarpaulin.

Option

An excerpt from the letter of Lopatyuk's wife to the NT editors. September 5, 1988. *"Among the members of the tanker's crew was my husband Vsevolod Lopatyuk. 34 years have passed since he set out on the voyage. 34 years our family has waited for news of him. We filed so many inquiries with the authorities to get one and the same answer: 'Your husband's fate is unknown.' I am asking you to help me now that I know where he is. Believe me, I am not trying to prove anything to you, nor am I seeking any advantage for myself. I want only one thing – the truth, no matter how bitter it may be..."*

To be frank, Lopatyuk's whereabouts worry us too. The Foreign Ministry of the U.S.S.R. is now inquiring as to the motives behind his decision not to return to the Soviet Union together with the other three who arrived this August. The search department at the Alliance of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies of the U.S.S.R. is also continuing its efforts. We have fallen back on our own channels, trying not to overlap with government and public bodies. We recalled that it was the French consulate on Taiwan that had helped us thirty odd years ago to bring the first group of our sailors back home. That is why we got in touch with Ms **Xing Xingyang,** a France-Presse correspondent on Taiwan. Without a lot of persuasion and questions, she consented to see Lopatyuk and talk with him for us.

November 11, 1988. The France-Presse correspondent talks from Taipei over the phone:

"I met Lopatyuk on Saturday, November 5 this year in the new flat he was recently given in Taipei after moving from the Yilan camp. He lives alone. He is well. He has no job so far, but says that the Taiwan authorities promised to help him find employment. He wants to teach Russian (he worked as a baker on the tanker – **Authors).** Some universities on Taiwan have a course in the Russian language. Now he is awaiting Taiwanese citizenship. He expects to obtain it within a few weeks. He is not planning to return to the Soviet Union. He is quite satisfied on the island; he has become accustomed to the local ways, and he likes them..."

Lidiya Devdera, Venedikt Eryomenko's sister, has also turned to us and asked us to help her find her brother and find out why he became a U.S. citizen. Besides him, there are two more members of the Tuapse crew – Viktor Tatarnikov and Viktor Solovyov. Mikhail Ivankov-Nikolov, one of those who remained in the United States, worked as a dish-washer for a long time. Then it transpired that he was suffering from a serious mental disturbance and they left him, in a deranged state, at the door of the Soviet Embassy; he was brought to the Soviet Union where he underwent a course of treatment in a mental hospital.

Meanwhile, our correspondent in New York tried to get in touch with those who live in the United States. Just at that time he came across the latest issue of the émigré newspaper Novoye Russkoye Slovo (The New Russian Word) which printed a local journalist's interview with Solovyov. Our correspondent was refused a rendezvous.

Background note

Over 1986-88 alone, eight armed attacks have been made on Soviet non-naval ships. For example, on March 22, 1986, after midnight, pirates attacked the motor vessel Vysokogorsk in the Strait of Malacca. The armed bandits got to the skipper's cabin, robbed his safe, took his personal effects and, having locked him in the cabin, left the ship. On March 3, 1987, the motor ship Slutsk, passing through the Singapore Strait, came under attack. The chief mechanic was viciously stabbed with knife.

Not only Soviet sailors fall victim to pirate attacks. On October 20, 1988, off the coast of Benin, a Greek merchant vessel came under attack. The pirates opened fire from automatic guns and wounded the skipper and two crewmen. There have been cases of sailors being kidnapped.

The territorial waters of Southeast Asia, particularly in the vicinity of Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines, the Gulf of Suez and the western coast of Africa, have been classified as high-risk zones.

Yilan. The sailors spent long years in this small settlement on the sea-shore *Photo from National Geographic (U.S.A.)*

Their families were waiting

Pisanov's father, Sablin's sisters, Kniga's mother and sister. Tamara Enina, Sablin's sister, tells about the emotions they all have experienced during this ordeal:

"I first heard from a radio report that my brother and his two friends were returning home. It's

too much for words to describe what I felt at that moment. People are usually happy when they hear this. The emotion of joy may take diverse forms. As for me, it expressed itself in sheer hysteria. Something snapped. Then telephone calls ensued from my friends, acquaintances, relatives. Some time later we cooled down. Soon we saw our brother on the Vremya (Time) TV programme. When he went to sea, I was only seven. In fact, I don't remember him, only a photograph helps me recognize him. I have a photo I always carried with me. It shows a young man of twenty. And here on TV, I saw an elderly man. But I'll tell you, it might have been the feeling of kinship that helped me to recognize him immediately. Now I am in Odessa to stand by him. I think I can do more for him than he can for himself because he has become unused to our ways after 34 years abroad. After that long absence, returning is not easy, with many problems still beyond his comprehension. After all there must be somebody who will help!"

More people than just relatives display concern. The three returnees are now receiving dozens of letters in which the correspondents offer help, show sincere affection and express their sympathy.

The former sailors brought back and gave to relatives the personal things and

What was Lopatyuk thinking about while preparing the burial urns with the ashes of his comrades to send them from Taiwan to the Soviet Union?

Photos sent in by V. Lopatyuk

photographs of Mikhail Kalmazan – everything they managed to take from Taiwan. George Dimov, Mikhail Kalmazan and Anatoly Kovalyov asked before they died that their remains be buried at home...

The Singapore consulate, complying with the requests of the Soviet Union, took on the mission of returning their remains home. The long-awaited day came for the relatives of the sailors who died on Taiwan: an Aeroflot flight brought from Singapore via Moscow the ashes of the sailors to be buried in their native soil. Along with the ashes came photographs showing V. Lopatyuk performing the cremation ceremony, packing the capsules with the ashes into boxes. I wonder what the man looking at us from the photos is thinking about.

The decision of the personnel

It might have seem to be the end of the story. But we had yet to find out how the survivors who made it home were faring. Strictly speaking, they did not find any home here when they arrived. What conditions were they offered? To begin with, we should probably say that the Black Sea Steamship Line, upon being informed of the sailors' arrival, set up a special commission to find out what the returnees needed. By the findings of the commission, only Sablin needed accommodation. Kniga's and Pisanov's relatives have enough room in their flats, according to "the sanitary norms," to accommodate one more person each.

That was all the person-

el knew about the matter before it was to pprove the decision adopted by the administration and the trade union committee. Forty per cent are sea-going sailors, xperienced seamen who best of all now what work on the open seas is like nd are aware of the dangers that can aylay on board a ship. Fortunately, an cident like the Tuapse seizure has never ccurred since then.

These people, who know the worth of ailors' work, must have come to the final ecision. During the discussions, other roposals came up before the commission too: provide accommodation in a ostel, put on the waiting list for new ousing (by Odessa standards that eans twenty years or so), pay two onths' wages in compensation for all e trials and tribulations and that would e it. Truth to tell, that was the first time e saw the council "in action."

The sitting had to iron out many probms which proved rather difficult. The ousing problem in Odessa, as incidenlly in many other cities, is acute. This ar the turn comes for those who registred in 1968. People eligible for earlier ovision of accommodation as "young pecialists" (some of them have been romoted to the rank of skipper while aiting) joined the Black Sea Steamship ne a good fifteen years ago. What ould their reaction be? After all had en said and done, Sablin and Kniga ere promised one-room flats each in a use for workers with small families hich will soon be built.

Their employment has been taken care too. The two will be working at the dessa yacht club while Pisanov will ave a job in the city of Nikolayev where e went to be near his sick father. As a atter of fact, only Sablin is fit enough w to start working. The others will have undergo a course of treatment.

The question of financial aid has been ettled too. Some of the council members were baffled by the fact that the aiwan authorities, who must have felt eir guilt before the detainees and were ying to make up for it somewhat, presented the sailors with 20 thousand U.S. ollars each before their departure. But s no good to count other people's oney. And this is precisely the view of ose who finally endorsed the Soviet financial aid of 5 thousand rubles for each turnee which, in the opinion of the ajority on the commission, will be ough for them to start anew.

Incidentally, our reader V. Solomhenko from Tashkent was right in pointg out our mistake in our issue 35, 1988, hich said that the members of the uapse crewmen's families continued to ceive an allowance up until the return of e sailors. As it transpired later, we had sed information dated back to 1958. In ctual fact, however, the payments were topped in 1963.

We stood our ground

This phrase was said by Anton Beslalov, the tanker's chief mechanic, who after the return from Taiwan worked for a long time with the Black Sea Steamship Line. At the reunion in Odessa – gathering all former Tuapse crewmen who could come – the sailors recalled this particular phrase. There and then they suggested one of the ships be named after mechanic Bespalov for it is due to his courage and energy that the 29 members of the crew who first returned home had been able to withstand the bitter test for many months.

Who came to the reunion? Viktor Lyakhovsky – cheerful as ever, full of strength and energy, though he underwent a serious operation two years ago. The prototype of the main hero in the film "An Accident" (played by Vyacheslav Tikhonov) is in retirement, now looking after his grandson. Among those who came were Nikolai Fyodorov who still goes on overseas voyages, and Ivan Miroshnik who now works on an excursion launch taking holidayers for trips around the Odessa port. Mikhail Karpov works there too... Vladimir Sablin and Valentin Kniga also came.

The reunion of the Tuapse crewmen in Odessa in October 1988. The story they told could have been a sequel to the film "An Accident." The meeting of people who returned home in different years: in 1955, 1957, 1988. Sometimes their versions of one and the same event vary...

Photos by I. Chernetsky

Completing the first instalment of the feature about the three who returned from Taiwan (NT issue 35, 1988), we had no idea what their meeting with their former mates would be like. At last we saw all of them together. But conversation did not come easily – the old sailors would not like to go back in their own company to these events of the past, to drag them out of oblivion. Some reproached the recent returnees for signing the declaration renouncing their Motherland; presently all unanimously conceded that now after 34 years of dramatic events, the three recent arrivals should be provided with all the necessary conditions for life in the Soviet Union.

They also recalled Anton Bespalov's words when the plane bringing them back home touched down. Their group of sailors, the first, was met in 1955 with flowers.

From Mikhail Karpov's diary:

"We walk to the plane. Correspondents won't leave us alone. The plane bears U.S. identification marks. The American pilots meet us at the entrance. We take our seats and a little while later the aircraft is going down the runway towards the sea. A jerk – and we are in the air. Thunderous hurrahs burst out in the plane drowning out the noise of the engines. Everyone began to congratulate each other. The door of the pilot's cabin opened. Two American pilots came out and joined in with their congratulations. Olya Panova cries, no one can hold back the tears, but who cares."

Irina Lagunina and Mikhail Khrobostov
ODESSA – MOSCOW

PROFILE SKETCHES

Actress **Susan Sarandon,** well known to U.S. audiences from films and plays, such as "The Life of Ben Franklin" and "An Evening with Richard Nixon" has demanded that the FBI cease interfering in the private lives of Americans. She herself is listed as an opponent of Reagan's Central America policies for having helped Nicaraguan women and children. "It's hard to explain that voicing my opinion... will lead to calling me a supporter of international terrorism," she told a news conference outside the FBI's New York office.

At the same time the New York group of lawyers from the Centre for Constitutional Rights has taken the FBI to court. They are claiming that the FBI has thousands in its computer data baks, they want to deprive it of opportunities of using the files against supporters of the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador who could be denied government jobs.

* * *

His stories "glow in their own skins as art," John Updike, noted modern American prose writer, says of compatriot **David Kidd**'s "Peking Story: The Last Days of Old China."

Born in the U.S. in 1926, he continually writes about China. He preferred to take a university course in China where he majored in Chinese poetry. While there he married a Chinese girl of aristocratic stock.

His book is a collection of stories embracing possibly the most dramatic chapter of China's history, which he himself witnessed. In the beginning, which he wrote as far back as 1952, he furnishes a realistic glimpse of the fading traditional society before and during the revolution. He and his wife were obliged to leave for the U.S. in 1950. Though concurrent events in China are scarcely completely objective, nevertheless his account provides a stirring picture of the conflict between two epochs and cultures, as seen through the eyes of a man whose heart lies with the old aristocracy.

"Writing the final chapter was harder than writing the whole book," he admits. In it he describes the ravages of the "cultural revolution" as seen when revisiting China in 1981. He confesses that here wrath dominated despair, when observing the traces of the wholesale destruction of cultural relics.

China's ancient culture remains the basic love and object of research for David Kidd, who turned 61. Having spent a large part of his life in Japan, he says: "You have to come to Japan to see 8th-and 9th-century China. It's gone in China."

* * *

Visiting the U.S.S.R. on tour for the first time is a pop star leading the hit parade for this current, not past decades.

For a whole fortnight **Bonnie Tyler** enchanted a nightly enthusiastically responsive 5,000 at the Moscow Olympiiski Concert Hall.

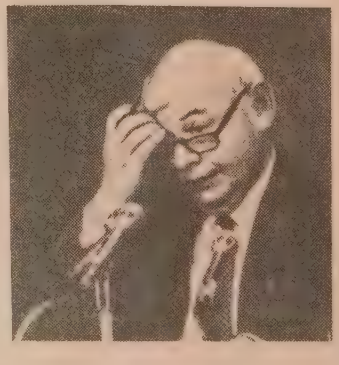
Welsh-born Bonnie Tyler acquired singing experience at youth clubs and cafés, leaping into fame in November 1976, with the ballad "Lost in France." She donned the toga of rock star eminence in 1983, with the LP "Faster than the Speed of Night."

Last spring she produced a new LP "Hide Your Heart," which she did in the space of but a fortnight at the Bearsville Records Inc. in the U.S., famous for its recordings of Janis Joplin.

"I have been both lucky and unlucky in America, where I felt lost," she recalls. "However now I have a nos-

Man of the year

The well-known Polish journalist **Jerzy Urban,** the press spokesman for the Polish government has been awarded the Wiktor statuette prize, as the most glamorous television personality and has placed among the top six "Men of the Year" in a poll of the female readership of the magazine Kobiete i Zycie. His weekly televised press conference attracts an audience of nearly eight million. In-between, from Tuesday to Tuesday, he not only monitors the work of the government press office and



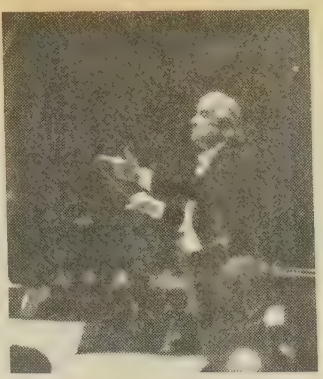
takes a hand in drafting its communiqués, but also analyzes everything printed, maintains contacts with fellow newsmen, ambassadc and politicians, atten cabinet meetings and proce ses and analyzes a hu amount of information. N wonder, he is hardly ev caught napping at news co ferences.

"I evoke mixed feelings," I says. "I am an ardent debat do not avoid sarcasm, am o stinate, say unpleasant thing and perhaps for that reas arouse negative response However whether I am lov or not is not important. The ir portant thing is that I get a ross even to people inclined reject my arguments offhanc

gic hankering for America
d these are my notes." The
's title song is "Notes from
nerica."
Will her 1989 LP start with
ecollections of Moscow"?
e climaxed each night in the
viet Union with the immortal
eatles song "Back in the
S.S.R."!

* * *

he concerts eminent con-
uctor **Sergiu Celibidache**
s given with the Munich
ilharmonic, with which he
s been since 1979, scored a
with Moscow music lovers.
His repertoire is vast and
ried, even though he does
t conduct for operatic per-
mances and avoids record-
g, which he sees as the



sterilization of music. In the view of foreign critics his renderings are conspicuous for their musicality and refinement.

Sergiu was born in Romania in 1912 and in his boyhood learned to play the piano. After a year at the Sorbonne in Paris, he studied the fundamentals of composition, musicology and conducting at the Berlin Higher School of Music. Simultaneously he studied mathematics and philosophy and presented two theses in musicology and in mathematics.

In 1945 he placed first in a competition for the vacant office of chief conductor of the Berlin Philharmonic, in which capacity he took over from the great Furtwängler, staying with the orchestra until Furtwängler's return. This marked the beginning of his career as an orchestra conductor. Since the early 1950s he has conducted the National Academy Santa Cecilia orchestra in Rome, the La Scala Orchestra in Milan, the Copenhagen, Stockholm, and Madrid symphonic orchestras, the London Symphonic Orchestra and the Tokyo, Zurich and many other orchestras.

Sergiu is famous for the intensity of rehearsal, conducting from 10 to 18 rehearsals, or two daily, for each programme. Moreover, none of his musicians nor the orchestra generally may assume any outside obligations while with him.

He never gives an autograph saying, "what you must retain is the impression not the autograph," and pays little notice to applause, which he says "is not for me but for the composer who creates the music."

* * *

Saltanat Kamaliyeva, a 20-year-old Kazakh college student, has won the "Miss Asia '88 beauty contest, a charity affair mounted in London, of which all the money derived will go to promote education and build schools and kindergartens in Asian countries.

Of Saltanat's large family, she says, any of her three sisters could have won the beauty contest. She herself models for the republican fashion centre, and studies extramurally at the Kazakh Abai Teacher Training College. Returning to Alma-Ata from London she was offered the job of compering a Kazakh TV youth programme. She has also received offers from various foreign-based advertising agencies.

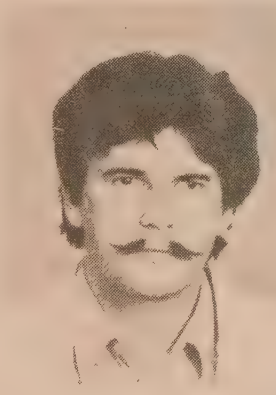
* * *

creative architect

garian architect **Sandor venyi** attracted the eye of erts in the U.S. and West- Europe for his redesigned toric quarter of Pecs which azed colleagues with its nd of tradition, modernity d individuality.

Today 40-year-old Sandor an acknowledged authority, d the recipient of some zen prizes; indeed, year er year his projects have erited the House of the Year e, he has won a range of mpetitions, while last year was awarded the Miklos Ibe ize, Hungary's top award for chitecture.

After completing the Tech- cal University of Budapest, ndor sought fortune in the ungarian capital for a while, fore going back to his native ecs, which is celebrated for s architectural tradition. By e mid-1970s the town af- rded all the conditions eeded for a successful areer, notably a wise town- uilding policy, a well-con- eived plan for reconstruction, op-notch specialists in the



building division of the local town council, and a chief architect who is a real enthusiast. To this day Sandor regards the redesigned historic quarter of Pecs as his main professional achievement.

"With a new diploma in one's pocket," Sandor recollects, "I think the trained architect needs but idea and imagination to design original structures. By now I know that architecture is an applied science. Though the architect must know world and national history and art history, that is not enough as he must also understand a town's individuality, and study its structure, proportions, traditions and communications. Each town is a living organism and its buildings must be an organic part of this organism."

For this reason Sandor ranks among his basic achievements not so much his prize-winning houses and public buildings, as the tunnel he managed to get the town authorities to eventually build. Though for some 50 years Pecs residents has dreamed of a bridge, Sandor demonstrated that a many thousand-ton concrete bridge would spoil the cityscape, whereas a tunnel would excellently integrate with both urban and natural environment.

Sandor is married and has three children. Recently he quit his job to start a small architectural cooperative.

Agnes Horvath

BUDAPEST

* * *

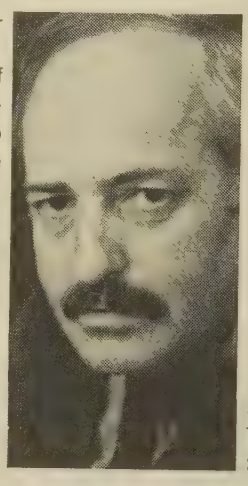
"The post-horses of the enlightenment"

Alexei Bukalov

That is how the great Russian poet Alexander Pushkin described translators meaning their hard work to bring the nations closer together and help them learn more about each other.

The art of translation is many centuries old. Translators have argued that the honour of being members of the second most ancient profession belongs to them and not to journalists. According to Herodotus, translation was recognized as a profession in its own right back during the rule of the Egyptian Pharaoh Psammetichus in the 7th century B.C.

Never has the need for prompt exchanges of ideas and books between various nations and governments, politicians and ordinary people been so great. The tower of Babel was never built because its builders were cursed and spoke a babble of tongues. In this day and age building a new durable edifice of world peace is impossible without mutual understanding, and consequently the hard work of experienced and skilled middlemen – translators and interpreters. No interrnational dialogue can do without them.



Nations learn about each other by meeting the heroes of folklore and literature. The Noble Prize winning Yugoslav author Ivo Andric compared the translator to a guide who has the courage to take the reader by the hand and together with Dante, Goethe, Cervantes, Shakespeare and Tolstoi introduce him to new epochs and worlds.

The Russian and Soviet school of translation is based on a tradition of brilliance and has given the world many masters of the art. That is why Kornei Chukovski, a distinguished translator himself, entitled his book about the art of translation "The Lofty Art."

Incidentally, men of such caliber as Palmiro Togliatti and Maurice Thorez, Jacques Duclos and William Gallacher worked in this country as translators.

At the moment translators and interpreters account for a considerable part of the Soviet intelligentsia. There are no accurate statistics about their actual number, although an estimate of 500 thousand is sometimes given, but the crucial importance of their work is clear. No international organization can operate without them. Citizen diplomacy, the ideological support for restructuring and the familiarization of the outside world with revolutionary processes under way in this country are impossible without them. Our contribution to world civilization would also be impossible without their hard work. The part of translators assumes a special significance at this stage in efforts to improve interethnic relations in the U.S.S.R.

Needed: a translators' association

The services of translators are indispensable whenever the language barrier arises – be it on festive occasions or in distress, as the tragedy of Armenia has borne out.

Their performance must meet most exacting requirements. The responsibility they bear is great and the mastery of their art knows no limits. The Russian author Alexander Kuprin said that "in order to be able to translate from a foreign language it is not enough to have a perfect command of that language. One must also be able to reach for the innermost, living and varied meaning of every word."

Let us see whether the social status of translators really corresponds to the important contribution they make nowadays. Very often translators have no official status as such. Very often they are anonymous, at best you can find the translator's name tucked away in small print at the end of a book. An interpreter may make possible a historic dialogue, but he would never leave his booth, or appear on a historic photograph, the chances are that he will be retouched as a piece of furniture and kept out of sight on it. There is no juridical status for translators. Their profession is not on the lists compiled by the State Committee for Labour and Social Affairs. A small group of translators who translate works of fiction and poetry full time is part of the Writers' Union of the U.S.S.R., but others have to work under the guise of members of all kinds of other professions, secretaries and engineers.

At this time of glasnost and perestroika many new public organizations are emerging in this country. Soviet translators and interpreters also decided to set up a trade union of their own following the example of their colleagues in Bulgaria, the G.D.R., Poland and many other countries. A constituent conference of the Moscow Association of Translators has just been held. It set forth the tasks of keeping up the standard of translation in the country, contribute to the drawing up of a concept of the profession (nonexistent at present), and improve the training standards. The association is planning to become a national organization to strengthen our positions at international translators' associations where only the Writers' Union is represented now. Let us hope it will be publishing a professional bulletin. Tetrady Perevodchika, a trade publication that has been issued for nearly 20 years recently closed down. The association has made big plans. Let us wish every success those who, in the words of Romesh Chandra, lend the world a voice.

Still grounded, but optimistic

MICHEL TOGNINI, a member of the back-up team, comments on Soviet-French cooperation in space research

New Times. The Soviet Union and France have been doing fruitful joint research of near-earth space for twenty-two years now. At the same time your country cooperates with the U.S.A. in this sphere as well. France is the only country whose cosmonauts have flown on board both Soviet and American spaceships. Aren't you afraid that being divided between the two superpowers' space research programmes may cramp your style?

Michel Tognini. In my view, the Soviet and U.S. space research programmes largely complement one another. The Soviet Union has accumulated vast experience in space medicine and long-time orbital flights. The United States has been bent on shuttle spaceships which the Soviet Union lacked until recently. Both lines of space research are of equal importance to France. The thing is that our national programme is geared to the development of the Hermes re-usable space plane and the Columbus orbital station. As far as joint manned space flights are concerned, 65 per cent of what they cost us goes to the U.S.S.R., and 35 per cent – to the U.S.A. We are thankful to both the U.S.S.R. and the U.S. for the cooperation they offer us in the field of cosmonautics. To the best of my knowledge, the Hermes is going to be the world's only spacecraft compatible with the Soviet station Mir and with the American station Freedom which is to go into orbit in the mid-nineties. This will make the Hermes indispensable as a universal rescue vehicle.

Jean-Loup Chrétien was a witness at the wedding ceremony for Michel Tognini and Yelena Chechina

TASS photo

N.T. The public has been pressing ever more insistently of late – in our country, at any rate – for putting the results of space research to early practical use. What experiments provided for by the programme of the current joint space mission could be of immediate benefit to the economy, in your opinion?

M.T. I'd mention the Echography experiment, for instance, which depends on ultrasonic and Doppler research methods for determining the rate and character of bloodstream in vessels and which exposes the heart and other internal organs to full view on a VCR screen. Another experiment, Physalie (Medusa), intended to study adaptation to zero gravity, may turn out to be of use to practising physicians in diagnosing various malfunctions of the central nervous system. The Minilab experiment is expected to disclose the mechanism of hypertension and hypotension – in conditions of zero gravity these diseases are modelled by nature itself.

In general, I am convinced that any knowledge will come in useful to man sooner or later. So far the Era experiment of rigging up a bizarre structure outside the spaceship looks like something out of a science fiction novel. The experiment is to be carried out by Alexander Volkov and Jean-Loup Chrétien (who, incidentally, will be the first cosmonaut from a "third country" to take a walk in space). Although of no applied value today, the experiment will certainly contribute towards orbital architecture of a decade or so from now.

N.T. Michel, talking about the future, how do you personally picture it? When do you expect to finally go up to space?

M.T. After a decade of flying a fighter plane, I put in another five years as a test pilot, and now it would be only natural for me to make the next step and to set off on a space mission. I would be a liar if I told you that I've ever considered a spaceman's career – for a Frenchman that would have been unrealistic. But when a competition for the second Soviet-French flight was announced, I hastened to apply. There were many aspirants, about a thousand in all. Hadn't it been for Jean-Loup Chrétien, I would hardly have passed this super-competition: our first cosmonaut singled me out of the rest. Therefore I usually shrug off the question of whether I envy my colleague who has already been to near-earth space on two occasions. As distinct from the first mission there has been no competition between the French cosmonauts this time.

Now I am confident I shall stay a cosmonaut. During President Mitterrand's visit to the U.S.S.R., an agreement was reached on our cosmonauts flying to space on board Soviet craft every two years. In all likelihood, I'll have my day next time, flying the Buran orbital plane.

N.T. May I take this rare opportunity to ask you what you expect from a space flight, and to find out, a few years later, whether it has lived up to your expectations?

M.T. First of all, I hope to make sure that weightlessness is a very pleasant state. Second, I am looking forward to admiring the inimitable beauty of our planet as seen from space. I want to take a good look at Vincennes where I was born, Arcachon where I work, Toulouse where our national space centre is. What's the most important thing of all, I am eager to try my hand at what I have dedicated myself to.

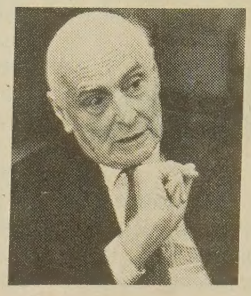
N.T. I heard you have met your love while training for an international space mission in the Star City...

M.T. Yes, I met Lena Chechina, our coach, a graduate of the physical culture institute. We've got married. Incidentally, we could have met earlier. A few years ago Lena's father, also an airman, visited my Normandie-Niemen regiment which still cherishes the traditions of our wartime combat cooperation.

Interviewed by
Sergei Leskov

LaRouche has lost

or more about Case No. 50285



Joë Nordmann is known to the NT Editorial Board not only as the President of the International Association of Democratic Lawyers, but also as a lawyer who has for two years represented the interests of this weekly at the Paris High Court and won Case No. 50285

In the summer of last year the political extremist Lyndon LaRouche and the French European Working Party filed a suit against New Times at the Paris High Court over the publication of the article "Nazism Without the Swastika" in NT No. 36/86. The article exposed the European Working Party as an international anti-Communist organization. LaRouche and his French supporters demanded that they be paid damages over what they saw as statements smearing them carried by New Times. The suit was filed against the Editorial Board of New Times, and the French companies La Librairie du Globe and Maison du Livre Etranger which distribute this weekly in France, as well as the Soviet airline Aeroflot, which delivers the magazine to France.

On September 30, 1987, the Paris High Court threw the case out and rejected every claim made in the suit. An appeal against that ruling was made...

"The appeal was considered for a long time at a series of hearings," Joë Nordmann told us at the New Times office during a recent visit to Moscow. "A complicated legal procedure had to be invoked and there were quite a few problems. French laws are very strict where allegations or slander are concerned. Your magazine said the truth, but it had to be demonstrated that it was an unprejudiced truth with documents in hand. I had to go through mounds of papers and the statements and articles of LaRouche himself, which proved to be a very distasteful experience."

"What is the wording of the ruling of the Paris Court of Appeal?"

"I will quote from it for the sake of accuracy:

"'Considering the fact that, according to the arguments presented by judges of the first instance court, which this court accepts, the considerable body of evidence in the European and U.S. press quoted during the hearing of the case relying on the numerous studies of the ideology, methods, activities, published and oral statements made by Lyndon LaRouche makes it possible to draw conclusions fully or partially coincident with the conclusions made by the authors of the article at issue;

"'Considering that the authors of the article at issue relied on valid documentation consisting of articles carried by the press in many countries and quoted them without any distortion of their meaning, and

"'Considering that the case in point is a critical analysis of the international influence of a party acting from a proclaimed anti-Soviet position carried by a weekly magazine that is engaged in the propaganda of the official principles of Soviet communism abroad, the authors of the article at issue did not violate in this particular context, polemic by definition, any of the conventions accepted at large and have therefore every ground to counter the charges brought against them with evidence of their professional integrity.'"

The appeal was rejected.

"Does this put 'paid' to the case?"

"The plaintiff has the right to appeal to the Court of Cassation within two months after this ruling was announced. I have no idea at this point whether LaRouche will do it. At any rate, I don't foresee any more problems."

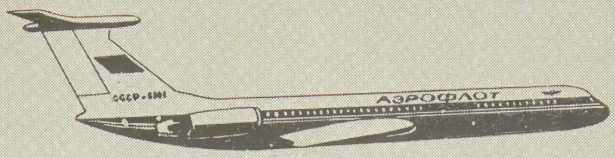
NT club in Ghana

These young people are members of Africa's first club of friends of the New Times weekly. The club was opened at a ceremony in Accra.

The national chairman of The New Times Readers' Club, Joseph D. Pappoe, said that the weekly is needed by the people who want to have impartial information about life in the U.S.S.R. and the world at large.

We welcome that comment and are grateful for it. A good start has been made. The membership of the club is growing. The NT Editorial Board would like to thank the organizers and members of the club. We hope that the good initiative of our friends in Ghana will be supported by our readers in other African countries and countries on other continents. We shall be doing our best to measure up to the expectations of our friends.

A VERY HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL OF YOU!



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